

# SIKHISM

*Edited by*  
**L. M. Joshi**



**PUBLICATION BUREAU**  
**PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**

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Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies  
Punjabi University, Patiala  
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*Edited by*  
**L.M. Joshi**

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## FOREWORD

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THOUGH man's religious consciousness has been, time and again, enshrined in song and scripture, in art and architecture, from the beginning there has always been a need for exegetical literature. For the saint and the layman, the literature of prophecy is enough, but the advanced initiate and the rational thinker always seek doctrinal support. Each major religion, therefore, has gathered a huge mass of expository material which helps project its true image. Nevertheless, it continually requires fresh thought and application inasmuch as it has to meet the requirements of the changing imagination. That is indeed how a religion remains a living force. The efforts of the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University—the first Department of its kind in Indian universities—to bring out up-to-date volumes on the five principal religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism—is accordingly a scholarly step of great value, particularly as it synchronizes with the 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nānak. The release of the volumes on this occasion, therefore, is an apt and concrete tribute to the catholicity of the Founder's mind.

The primary aim of these publications is to give the reader an idea of the fundamentals of the religions in question. Thus, no comprehensive analysis or exposition has been attempted, though I trust, the scholarship which has been commissioned, has made a good job of it. These skeletal studies are intended, in particular, to bring the younger people in our colleges and universities into contact with the various streams of religious experience, thought and practice. Religion, though frequently abused by the pundit and the padre, remains man's most cherished heritage and hope. To open a window on to long and beautiful vista



is thus to invite the youth to unending pastures of pleasure. Literature of this kind has its own distinctive flavour and appeal. Once one has felt what Guru Nānak calls, "the touch of His Love", nothing else will quite satisfy.

PATIALA

August 5, 1969

KIRPAL SINGH NARANG

*Vice-Chancellor*

*Punjabi University*

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

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The present volume of essays on Sikhism, first published in 1969, has been out of print for some years now. Printing errors and irregularities in the documentation of references and transliteration of passages from Punjabi and Sanskrit sources crept into the first edition which was got up under pressure to catch up with quincentenary of Guru Nānak's birth. When the University decided to republish this volume, the task of revising it was entrusted to me.

In preparing this revised edition, a dual system of transliterating words of Indian origin into Roman characters has been adopted. Sanskrit forms of names and words, wherever used by the contributors, have been transliterated into Roman Characters according to the modern Western system universally adopted by scientific scholars of Indology. But this system has not been rigorously applied to the Roman transliteration of Punjabi forms of names and words. There are thus two methods of transliteration in this book—one for Punjabi words, the other for Sanskrit words. This dualism was inevitable in view of the original structure of the book.

Diacritical marks have been used in this edition wherever necessary. End notes and references have been carefully revised, completed and corrected, except in case where the authors had not cited the sources. A select bibliography on Sikhism has also been added to this edition.

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and its Head of the Department.*

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## INTRODUCTION

D.S. Maini

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Man's bafflement in the face of the cosmic mystery has led him, since his graduation to spiritual consciousness, to a ceaseless search for essence and identity. His own creature place in a world at once menacing and irrational appears so unreal, bizarre and precarious as to raise all manner of doubts and queries in regard to the fundamental nature of existence; more so when the impassive rock-face of reality will vouchsafe no answer, despite sustained assaults upon it. The inexplicable phenomena of pain and suffering, of tragedy and death, in particular, have thus impelled him to decipher the hieroglyphic code of life and look for the primary cause or ground. This quest has, over the millennia, assumed several forms and aspects, all of which have not necessarily been occult or arcane in nature, though, a point is reached in every type of endeavour where the human mind falters, and can only forge ahead with the help of a "leap" or an epiphany. This experience is not unique to saints and sages : all great scientists and explorers have indeed testified to the truth of the illumination behind the "breakthrough." Which is perhaps one way of saying that the apparent world of material reality too would remain largely opaque without a "signal" from beyond. It is possible, of course, to regard man in the plenitude of his powers as sovereign and sufficient, as most humanistic philosophies do, and yet, this marvellous "piece of work" whom Hamlet could not but salute for his "infinite" faculties even in the darkest moment of *angst* and *nausea* posits a force behind and beyond. For the concept of man as handiwork or artefact inevitably raises the question of the Grand Artificer or the Prime Mover. In short, man's spiritual autonomy appears relative rather than absolute.

Whether the world is a thought in the mind of "a mathematical thinker", as Sir Jeans Jeanes believes, or a "ghostly paradigm of things," *a la Plato*, or simply a fortuitous occurrence,

inventing some "religion" to come to terms with the imponderables of his existence. The need for this is both intellectual and spiritual. One may not be obliged to "return the ticket" without the supposition of God, as one of Dostoevsky's characters affirms, yet the soul of man will for ever keep yearning for glimpses or intimations of immortality. Religion, then, is an ordered and disciplined approach to man's creature state and aspirations. That institutionalized religion has often been a reactionary force conniving at social iniquities and political expediency does not invalidate religion *per se*. It may indeed be pertinent to add here that every great religion had a revolutionary origin and base, whatever its later history.

The present volume comprising five scholarly essays is an attempt to project Sikhism as a distinctive and viable religion which offers through scripture and church, in theory and practice, a unique philosophy of reality and a complete way of life. Obviously, the subject treated here do not add up to a comprehensive picture of Sikhism. The historical, theological, ethical, ceremonial and comparative aspects, though of seminal importance, do not make up the whole saga of a religion rich in affirmations and diversities. This volume, for instance, takes no direct or sustained cognizance of the Sikh concept of marriage, labour, sacrifice, non-violence, death, suicide, royalty and commonwealth etc. Nor does it offer except through illustrative quotations, even a partial view of Sikh poetry, music, art and architecture. Some of these things have been touched upon in passing and are even subsumed under the primal categories taken up for study here, but as will be readily seen, the present volume, though raising encyclopaedic expectations, only sets out the basic positions of the Sikh religion. There is, I may add, an impressive body of Sikh exegetical literature in Punjabi (Gurmukhi script), and though a part of it has been translated into English both by Sikh and British scholars, a great deal of it has yet to reach the West. This volume, it is hoped, will help promote scholarly and scientific interest in a creed which has all the attribute and graces of major world religions.

Each religion has its own unique *raison d'eter* and affiatius. It is called into being at a given time in history, and has an



ineluctable destiny. Why, how and where it manifests itself is a question that admit of both metaphysical and sociological variations, though, I believe, it is Safer to interpret its origin in terms of the moment, the milieu and the Master. Sikhism in particular, answers to this description. Guru Nanak's advent in the second half of the 15th century is a phenomenon which has an archetypal stamp upon it. The times indeed were "out of joint"; the people lay supine and prostrate before a ruthless and tyrannical ruler from abroad. The native Hindu clergy, custodians of *Dharma* had either forfeited their estate, or, in more extreme cases, opted out of their human obligations, embracing eccentric creeds of renunciation. Iniquity, oppression, obscurantism or the one hand, passivity, pusillanimity and misery on the other, were the order of the day. In short, the classic conditions invited a shattering explosion. The moment was ripe for emergence of a charismatic leader who could wipe out the shame of indignity and rouse the somnolent conscience of man. He, for once, wielded no worldly power, no sword or stick. Armed with God's Word, and robed in piety and humility, Guru Nanak set out to realize and preach the best of Hinduism and Islam. Sikhism was thus, as we shall see in the subsequent essays, a child of the religions renaissance effected by the Bhakti and Sūfi movement. Retaining its acquired revolutionary mutations *en route* the Islamic concepts and precepts of monotheism, iconoclasm, corporate ethical responsibility, egalitarianism, personal conduct and commitment in particular, had a profound effect upon it. Synthesis was thus the conceptual matrix of Sikhism. This idea informs all the essays included in this volume in varying degrees, and many, therefore, be taken as perhaps the most vital formative trait of the new creed.

The history of a religion is, in fact, the history of a people's spiritual travail, growth and progress. Usually, the germinal seed takes a long time to hold, for it has to strike root in an inhospitable and intractable soil. Sikhism, however, though formally consecrated and institutionalized after Guru Nānak, carried from the outset a kinetic potential capable of encountering and surmounting the difficulties each new religion has to face. A built-in resilience gave it a unique freedom. In fact, it threw all

the more when put to the test or trial. No wonder, the brief historical account of Sikhism which Dr. Fauja Singh has given, is an essay in suffering and sacrifice. From the moment of its initiation by Guru Nānak to its ritual consecration by the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, a period of barely 200 years, Sikhism acquired not only its distinctive church and institutions, songs and scriptures, sings and symbols, but also, an unmistakable form or stance. The establishment of Guruship, the story of succession, the founding of Amritsar and other seats of Sikh religion, the compilation of the *Adi Granth*, the institutions of *sangat* or congregation and *langar*, or the community kitchen, the martyrdom of the Gurus, the panoply and plumage of power, the investiture of the Khalsa, all these and many other events which go to make the Sikh chronicle give it the colour and sound of high drama. Sikhism may be said, in a way, to epitomize in a symbolic form the entire religious history of mankind.

No religion, of course, would be complete without a considered theology. The psychology of religious experience, though indivisible, yet admits of different interpretations. Sikhism, as Dr. Trilochan Singh tells us in his essay, like other major religions, has some basic theological concepts which are supreme and inviolate. This is not to aver that its stand is dogmatic, for the Sikh Gurus have never countenanced dogma and shibboleth. On the contrary, suppleness of thought characterizes Sikh theology as enunciated in the *Ādi Granth*. However, some of the basic positions stem from Hinduism, though the Semitic strains can be clearly seen. For example according to Sikh thought, God can be apprehended and experienced, though He cannot be fully understood, for the ineffable can never be wholly realized or rendered. Sikhism like Judaism and Islam affirms the unity of God, and is critical of both polytheism and henotheism. For it God is Self-existent, infinite, Eternal and Absolute. He is at once Immanent and Transcendent, Omnipotent and Omniscient, Creator and Destroyer. All sins and crimes wither away in the presence of His Grace. Other theological doctrines which Dr. Trilochan Singh and Shri Sohan Singh have taken note of include the nature of creation, the concept of *hukam* or *raze* (acceptance of the Will of God), the place of the body and the

self, the role of the Guru and the Prophet, the concept of the *Nām* or Word, the idea of *karma* and free will, the phenomena of reincarnation and transmigration, the concepts of hell and heaven and the Final Judgement etc. Since some of the theological doctrine and positions have distinctly sociological and ethical overtones, Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib too has rightly amongst other things, taken these into account in his essay on Sikh ethical thought.

Sikhism, we understand, does not accept the view of man's eternal alienation from God and his consequent perdition. Though suffering is recognized as an active condition of life, it is not commanded or eulogized. Man is called upon to accept the will of God and thus sublimate his suffering and loss. Hell and heaven are part of the spiritual topography of man, and do not exist otherwise; and whilst the scroll of one's deeds in this world and the Justiciar beyond are metaphorically alluded to in the *Ādi Granth* and other scriptures, the idea of inexorable fate is not quite pressed. In fact, Sikhism, believing in the conquest of sorrow and suffering, stipulates ceaseless endeavour and free will.

Again, Sikhism unlike Hinduism or Buddhism takes a more positive and purposive view of the human being and his body. Man, the acme of God's creation is not merely a handful of dust, but the repository and medium of the message of the Lord. The body is not an unclean vessel, a seat of worms, but "the temple of God" worthy of adoration and reverence. And woman, "the mother of mighty heroes" is elevated to the highest position in the hierarchy of beings. She symbolise the eternal principle of creation. Woman, the spouse, in fact, serves as a rich metaphor in the *Ādi Granth*, where man's ineluctable relation to the Lord is conceived in corresponding terms and idiom. This attitude towards man, woman and the body is possible because Sikhism is a religion rooted in material and human reality. Whilst recognizing the truth of the Eternal as opposed to the evanescent, it does not dismiss the world out of hand as mere illusion of *Māyā*. In fact, it finds no contradiction between the acknowledgement of the Eternal and the acceptance of the physical reality. If anything, it sees a deep relationship in this paradox.

The ethical basis of Sikhism, too, derives from a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim tenets. Man's spiritual life invariably involves a moral vision of reality. No man or monk could achieve *Nirvāṇa* without disciplining the world of inner chaos. Desire, passion and pride could only be transcended when the psyche is in the tune with the infinite. *Haumai* or egoism, as Professor Talib affirms, is the most insidious evil in Sikh view. Man's suffering is a direct consequence of this lapse. Sikhism lauds the simple virtues of life such as purity, continence, contentment, service and sacrifice. It upholds moral reason and inculcates the feat of God in man. It discounts personal piety unrelated to social or public weal. It upholds the dignity of man and labour. Untouchability, perhaps the greatest single crime against God and humanity, is given no comfort or quarter. A life of action is commended as opposed to a life of passivity, flight and abdication. A Sikh is verily an "insider", a sharer of the riches of life, though he never loses sight of the ultimate reality. That's why the metaphor of the lotus is often used in the Sikh scriptures when the paradox of purity amidst dirt is to be highlighted.

Sikhism, because of its distinctive form and symbols, has often intrigued those who are unacquainted with its history and doctrines. The wearing of the beard and the long unshorn hair in particular has never been quite understood or appreciated. Since Sikhism is the only religion in the world to insist on this practice, one is apt to regard it as an anachronistic freak, if not a queer indulgence. In his essay on the five symbols of Sikhism Dr. J.P. Singh Oberoi has given a rational and plausible account using Western methodology and "the structural method". It is his contention "that all ceremonies and rites are expressive and affirmative in character, that they embody and communicate abstract meanings and values in concrete shape" Thus, the five "K" symbols of Sikhism — *Kes* (hair), *kangha* (Comb), *kara* (steel bracelet), *kirpan* (sword) and *kachh* (underwear) conjointly constitute a whole way of life. They put the initiated wearer perpetually on guard against erosion of this faith. They are indeed a constant and visible reminder of his plighted world and state.

The "depilatory injunction", according to Dr. Oberoi, is specifically related to the ceremony of initiation which each

neophyte has to go through. And since in embracing a new creed, he gives up the signs and symbols of his erstwhile, spent faith, every initiation is *ipso facto* a renouncement or divestiture. Since the monk's shaven head signified the Hindu concept of renunciation, of alienation from the world, the Sikh inversion represented forcefully "the negation of negation". In short the *kes* became a visible symbol of the Sikhs' commitment to life. And since the *kangha* denoted cleanliness and orderliness, it formed along with the *kes* "a unitary pair". Similarly, the *kara* and the *kirpan* between themselves represented power with honour, resolve with purpose. A Sikh was never to resort to the sword except under extreme circumstance. A Persian couplet from Guru Gobind Singh's *Zafarnāmā* or "The Epistle of Victory" addressed to the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, sums up the entire philosophy of the consecrated sword.

*When all else hast failed thee.*

*Thou shalt rightfully lift the sword.*

As for the last symbol, *kachh*, it obviously signifies the Sikh's manly control over his appetites even as he commits himself to the procreative world. This, too, would once again like the remaining symbols, stress the importance of affirmation in life.

It may not be perhaps out of place to suggest here the mystic importance of the figure "five" in Sikh theology. It was not without reason that the Tenth Guru ritually consecrated the *Sikh Panth* through *panch piāre* (the Beloved Five) whom he had earlier invested with full authority.

In the concluding essay, S. Sohan Singh has discussed the *ethos* of Sikhism in relation to, what he calls, "the Aryan religions" and "the Semitic religions," the two principal streams of religious experience and thought. Sikhism, unlike Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, accepts at once the ambivalence of God's essence both as *nirguṇa* or attributeless and as *saguṇa* or personal God. The Hindu mind, subtle and speculative, runs to metaphysical extremities, and not unoften, gets lost in the mazes and meshes of recondite thought. The Semitic mind, on the other hand, tends to emphasize the practical and moral aspect of man's life. One ponders the *mārga* or "the way", the other concerns itself with the individual's relationship with society and the Creator. Sikhism



regards the two approaches as complementary. For it religion is both a way and a commitment. And this streak of synthesis can be perceived in several other areas of theological and institutional import.

The important thing to note about Sikhism is its inherent eclecticism and resilience. It has, as we have seen, a capacity to take in heterogeneous doctrines, and resolve them into a coherent, positive and distinctive philosophy. The Sikh *weltanschauung* or world-view is no arbitrary or forced synthesis, doctrinal marriage of convenience. If anything, Sikhism jealously defends its sovereign and unique character.

It may finally be asserted that Sikhism is a thoroughly modern and progressive religion. From the beginning it rejected orthodoxy, formalism and feudalistic values. It sought to liberate man and make him conscious of his high vocation and high destiny. Such a revolutionary creed was bound to create a new race of men and women, leonine in aspect, vigorous and athletic, open and spontaneous, full of *joie de vivre*, with their eyes set on the stars. No wonder, the Sikh psyche endorses and promotes the time-spirit. The modernity of Sikhism may well be gauged from its attitude towards science, technology, industrialization, education, the welfare state etc. The Sikhs have unreservedly accepted the challenge and adventure of life. A religion that keeps on forging fresh tools to master reality may entertain no doubts in regard to its health and future. No dream is ever spent once its dialectics are understood.

## CONTENTS

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Foreword	(iii)
Preface to the Second Edition	(v)
Introduction	(vii)
I. Development of Sikhism Under the Gurus - <i>Fauja Singh</i>	1
II. Theological Concepts of Sikhism - <i>Trilochan Singh</i>	41
III. The Basis and Development of Ethical Thought in Sikhism - <i>Gurbachan Singh Talib</i>	79
IV. The Five Symbols of Sikhism - <i>J.P. Singh Uberoi</i>	128
V. Sikhism Among World Religions - <i>Sohan Singh</i>	144
Bibliography	167



# I

## DEVELOPMENT OF SIKHISM UNDER THE GURUS

Fauja Singh

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Sikhism is one of the most prominent, if not the only, surviving links of the several Bhakti movements that made their appearance in various parts of India during the medieval period. That it has stood the test of time, whereas most of the other contemporaneous movements have practically vanished, is however, not a mere accident of history, and may be explained by three important factors. The first among them is the establishment of suitable institutions. The beginning in this respect was made by Guru Nānak, the founder of Sikhism. After him, the process was ably carried forward by his nine successors, and gradually the Sikhs (the Nānakpanthis or Nānakprastan as they were then usually called) came to have a network of institutions which proved useful in more than one way. They provided an effective functional organization for the propagation and spread of the creed; institutionalized the fundamental of its teaching and made them easier to be imprinted on the minds of the devotees. They also imparted to it a hallmark of distinction and thereby smoothed the way for the development of its separate identity. None of the other movements that grew up during the medieval period was able to attain much success in the sphere of institutionalization.

Secondly, the firm social commitment of the Sikh movement prevented it from developing into a mere order of mystics. From the very first, no value was attached to renunciation of worldly life. Rather, all those who practised it, such as the *yogis* and the *siddhas*, were condemned as *shirkers* of responsibility towards

the people. The Sikh Gurus and their followers lived among the common people performing the routine duties of life, and never shrank from the obligations which were enjoined upon them as members of the society, no matter whether their character was religious, or social or political. In consequence, there developed a close identification between the movement and a large section of the people who realized the importance of its social purpose, and were ready to make any sacrifice for its sake.

The third factor making for the continuity of Sikhism was the powerful social backing that it received from the business and agricultural classes of the then society. With the revival of Indian trade with the countries of the north-west during the fifteenth century and later, particularly after the establishment of the Mughal Empire when the fear of invasions from Central Asia no longer existed, the trading community of the region acquired a measure of prosperity and social importance which created new urges in the minds of its members. As traders, they travelled widely and mostly, or almost always, in countries inhabited by the Muslims. Their contact with the Muslim community was rendered closer by the fact that the Hindus who occupied administrative positions, ran provision stores, supplied the requirements of troops in camps or under march, and advanced money on credit to rulers; officials and other important people, were usually drawn from the ranks of the same category of people. The type of vocations they chose for themselves, their mobility and their frequent contacts with people from other areas made their general outlook broad, elastic and progressive. They possessed intelligence, knowledge and were not apposed to the reordering of their values in the light of the new developments since the advent of Islam in India. Their economic interests, too, pointed to the necessity of a readjustment in the relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities. They were not like the *brāhmanas* who opposed all change and directed all their energies towards erecting high barriers between the Hindus and the Muslims; nor were they like the *yogis* and *siddhas* who had



developed an escapist attitude towards life, and had no worthwhile interest in the problems of society. On the contrary, they were well posted with the realities of the situation, and were not opposed to change, provided it was aimed at purifying the Hindu society of its excrescences and bringing about a better understanding between the communities. They were too intelligent to be beguiled by the religious orthodoxy of the *brāhmaṇas*. At the same time, they were too firmly entrenched in the Hindu culture to be persuaded to embrace Islam. It was at this psychological moment in history that Sikhism appeared on the scene. In its teaching they found exactly what they sought and consequently, lent their powerful support to the Sikh movement imparting to it the character of an urban or town-based movement. The immense financial resources of these classes proved a great asset to it, particularly during the initial period. Gradually, the agricultural classes also came in. Their joining the movement was facilitated partly by the hold that the commercial classes had on the cultivating classes, and particularly the eagerness of the Gurus to enroll them in the ranks of their followers in view of the impending conflict with the Mughal government. But the main reason that they came into the fold of Sikhism in such large numbers was that this new religion, with its principle of equality held out to them the alluring prospects of elevation in the social hierarchy. Being mostly immigrants from Central Asia, they stood at the bottom of the Hindu society and they knew that so long as they remained Hindus, the rigidity of the caste system would not admit of any chance of improvement in their social status. Some of them had embraced Islam and achieved a better status, but there were still many of them who felt chary of taking that step. For such people Sikhism offered an ideal and as it were, the long-sought-after opportunity to improve their position in society.

Sikhism originated with Guru Nānak (A.D. 1469-1539). He was followed by a continuous line of nine successors who for about two centuries guided the destiny of Sikhism. The line of

the Guru ended with the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708.

The fundamentals of Sikhism were laid down by the first of the line, Guru Nānak. His concept of the Supreme Being was of a universal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-merciful and ever-kind Father-God. He regarded all prophets and *avatāras*, all *ṛṣis* and *munis*, all *siddhas*, and *sādhus*, all *buddhas* and *nāthas*, all *pirs* and *sheikhs* as His creation, executing His commission. All people, therefore, irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, clime and sex, were united in being the creation of one and the same Father-God. Guru Nānak recognized no distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the ruler and the subject. He equated the low-caste *Sūdra* with the high-caste *brāhmaṇa* and the subject non-Muslim with the ruling Muslim. He wanted social harmony to replace social rivalry and hatred, and social unity to take the place of social disunity. But the unity he cherished was unity in diversity. He did not support, much less advocate, the merger of all cultures into a single monolithic whole. On the contrary he had no approbation for such of his people as blindly imitated the rulers in their habits of food, dress and language.<sup>1</sup> To him the rituals that masqueraded as religion were meaningless, rather wasteful. Even religious symbols carried no sense if they failed to convey what they stood for. What mattered, he stressed, was the purity of mind the sincerity of purpose, and the worship lacking in these qualities was mechanical, formalistic, and hence futile. He denounced the escapist *yogis* and *siddhas* as parasites and run-aways from social responsibilities. He had all praise for those who lived in the society and faced the problems of life courageously.<sup>2</sup> But living in the society, whatever be its importance, was by itself not enough. He set the greatest store by the integrity of conduct one displayed in one's dealings with fellow-creatures. He was of the view that unless the basis of this conduct was spiritual and had moral values, such as truthfulness, honesty, love, humility, forgiveness, charitableness, self-control, courage, contentment etc., there could be no sure foundations for peace, harmony and happiness in the society. He held truth very high,

but truthful living was rated the highest.<sup>3</sup> Encroachment on other peoples' rights was considered an evil and was strictly forbidden.<sup>4</sup> Guru Nānak was well conscious of the special role of leadership in maintaining the society in a sound state of health, and was severely critical of the kings, *brāhmanas* and *qāzis* who, in one way or the other, had strayed from their proper functions.

For the dissemination of his precepts and ideas, Guru Nānak undertook long tours<sup>5</sup> both in and outside India, visited prominent centres of Hinduism and Islam, and had detailed discussions with the so-called leaders of the various religious and social orders. To his precept he added the personal example of an ideal life. Himself a caste-Bedi Khatri, he had the Muhammadan Mardānā as his life-companion, the low-caste Lālo among the best of his followers, and the Muslim Sūfi Pīr of Pakpattan among the most intimate of his friends. At Kartarpur where he finally settled down with the members of his family, he took to agriculture for a living, and attracted to his congregation numerous people, irrespective of caste and creed.

Besides the fundamental principles of Sikhism, some of its basic institutions may also be traced back to the period of Guru Nānak. The head of the movement, the Guru, was assigned a pivotal position in the entire scheme of reform. He was regarded as far more scintillating than even a hundred moons and a thousand suns, as one who made angels of men in no time<sup>6</sup>, and indeed, as an indispensable ladder, a boat or a raft to attain the vision of God. The Guru-oriented person, *gurmukh*, was considered an ideal human being, where the self-oriented person, *manmukh*, was looked upon as devoid of all worth. The holy composition of the Guru was called *gurbāṇi* or *sabad* which, in point of veneration, was as high as the Guru himself. The singing of *sabads* constituted the best mode of worship. Guru Nānak attached great importance to the setting up of *sangats*,<sup>7</sup> holy assemblies, and wherever possible, he tried to establish them. These congregations were at first primarily concerned with religious devotion, though incidentally a few secular functions

were also performed by them. Another institution, that of *pangat*<sup>8</sup> or *langer* (free common messing), originated almost simultaneously with that of *sangat*. It performed a four-fold function. First, it imparted a secular dimension to the *sangat*. Secondly, it added to the functional efficiency of the Sikh organization. Thirdly, it translated the principle of equality into practice, making it obligatory for all people, whatever their status in life, to sit on the ground and eat together. Fourthly, it served as a cementing force among the followers of Sikhism. Before he breathed his last, Guru Nānak selected his successor and commissioned him to carry on the work he had started. The nomination of Angad to the Guruship was, in the words of Indubhushan Banerjee<sup>9</sup> "a fact of the profoundest significance." Trummpp writes, "the disciples of Nānak would no doubt have soon dispersed, and gradually disappeared, as well as the disciples of many other Gurus before Nanak, if he had not taken care to appoint a successor before his death."<sup>10</sup>

The period from Guru Angad Dev, the immediate successor of Guru Nānak, to Guru Arjan Dev, fifth in the line of succession, formed the first phase in the development of Sikhism. During this period, A.D. 1539-1606, it made rapid strides organizationally as well as in numbers, and developed into a distinct community. All the Gurus of the period were gifted poets who, like Guru Nānak himself, composed hymns of a high literary and religious appeal. Guru Arjan made a collection of all the compositions of his predecessors, and with the addition of his own and those of some likeminded saints of the land, compiled them into what may be called the Bible of the Sikhs. The script adopted for this purpose was neither Urdu nor Devanāgarī, but Gurmukhi, which was the name given to the reformed alphabet that Guru Angad Dev had evolved from a local script of the Punjab.

From the very first, the *Ādi Granth*, as it is now called received the deepest reverence from the Sikhs, not merely as the collection of their Masters' teachings, but also as a living proof of the Sikh doctrine that there was no essential difference between the Guru and his word (*sabad* or *bāṇī*).

There were several other factors which helped the crystallization of the Sikhs into a community. Their intense faith and devotion in the Gurus,<sup>11</sup> who were regarded as embodiment of the same spirit, the spirit of the Great Master Nānak, their deep regard for fellow-Sikhs and the unity of their social and religious beliefs and practices as well as their mode of worship—all these gradually conferred on them an identity of their own which consolidated their ranks, and easily marked them off from the rest of the people living around them.

The further evolution of the institution of *sangat* was another factor of immense importance in the development of the Sikhs. The *sangat* acquired more and more functions as the range of interests of the Sikh movement widened, and gradually attained a status even superior to that of the Guru himself. An important doctrine of Sikhism affirmed that there was no essential difference between the Guru and the true Sikh. The *sangat* being an assembly of true Sikhs was assigned even a higher position—a fact which was aptly described in the statement that the *sangat* was twenty one measures as compared with the twenty measures of the Guru.

From the time of the Third Master, Guru Amar Dās, it began to be felt that the Sikhs should have their own seats of religion and pilgrimage, so that it might not be necessary for them to go to the *ūraths* (holy places) of Hindus. A *bāoli* (a well with a pakka staircase reaching down to the water surface) was constructed at Goindwal under the instruction and personal supervision of Guru Amar Dās. The water of this well was consecrated, and a wash with it was regarded as an act of great spiritual merit. The two Masters who succeeded Guru Amar Dās, one after the other, also evinced great interest in building up new religious centres for their followers, Guru Amar Dās, founded the town of Chak Rām Dās which subsequently got its present name, Amritsar, from the holy waters of Pool of Immortality built there. The work on this tank was commenced by Guru Arjan Dev, who as well built a *gurdvāra* in the center of the tank calling it Harimandir, i.e. God's House. Similarly, Guru



Arjan constructed a big tank and a temple at Tarn Taran, a place not far removed from Amritsar. He also founded the towns of Kartarpur (District Jullundur) and Shri Hargobindpur (District Gurdaspur). The religious centres thus built up formed a great cementing force for the rising Sikh community. The Sikh *sangats* from far and near were drawn towards them as their holy place, and visited them whenever they could, some of them even making regular annual visits. During these visits the various *sangats* had the opportunity not only of meeting the Holy Guru and having his blessings, but also of coming into close contact with one another. They were provided free accommodation and free food during their stay. *Guru kâ langar* (free community mess) which had gradually developed into an enduring institution, was adequate for the purpose of feeding all the people who wanted to eat there. The food of the *langar* being considered sacred, there was hardly any one who would like to miss it. *Simran* (participation in the daily religious services, some of them conducted in the presence of the Guru himself) and *sevā* (*participation* in the community project and the *Guru kâ langar*) were the two major constituents of the daily routine of the visiting Sikhs. In consequence, unbreakable bonds of union were formed which imparting solidarity and cohesion to the Sikh ranks, fused the far-flung and diverse units into a single, well-integrated organization.

The process of integration of Sikhism went hand in hand with the enlargement of its ranks. As early as the time of Guru Amar Dās twenty-two *manjis* and fifty-two *pīrhis* were created,<sup>12</sup> which were all big or small centres for the spread of Sikhism. Guru Rām Dās who succeeded Guru Amar Dās established the nucleus of a new order of missionaries, called *masands*. This new order was reorganized and elaborated by the Fifth Guru Arjan Dev. As was expected, these measures led to the emergence of the large number of new Sikh *Sangat* in the country. The mode of initiation of prospective Sikh through the ceremony of *caraṇāmrit* was the one administered by the Guru himself, but

since it was not possible for the Guru to be present everywhere, the authority had to be delegated to the local missionaries who were given the freedom to enroll new members of the Sikh *sangat* through the administration of *caran nāmrit* <sup>13</sup> prepared by themselves in the prescribed manner.

The bulk of the people who came into the fold of Sikhism as the result of the above-mentioned efforts were drawn from the commercial classes mostly dwelling in towns.<sup>14</sup> These people as noticed before, possessed in ample measure both intelligence and wealth. They provided the requisite leadership which under the guidance of the successive Gurus dug deep the foundations of the Sikh movement. Without their practical knowledge of the affairs of the world and their organizing ability, the task of executing the plans of the various Gurus for the furtherance of the movement would have presented endless difficulties. Similarly, their wealth placed at the disposal of the Gurus enormous resources which were utilized for the consolidation and expansion of the movement. It was with the help of this wealth that the huge project of Guru Rām Dās and Guru Arjan Dev be could carried through. Again, if the free-community-mess remained viable and met the requirements of the ever-rising members of the Sikhs, it was largely due to the prosperity of the supporting class of traders and businessmen. During the period of Guru Arjan Dev the movement became popular in the countryside also, with the result that a large number of the Majha Jāts embraced Sikhism.<sup>15</sup> This fact greatly added to the strength of the movement by injecting into it traditions of martial valour.

The organization of a sound system of finance was an essential pre-condition of the success of the movement. In the beginning, the voluntary offerings of the devotees were sufficient and no special arrangement was necessary for collection of funds. But later on when big projects were undertaken, the existing practice was found inadequate. In order to meet the situation, the *masands* were required not merely to concentrate on the dissemination of the Sikh teachings but also a collect voluntary offerings from

the faithful and to bring them to the headquarters of the Guru as and when they would come to see him. The new measure met with immediate success and there was no difficulty left regarding the availability of finance.

The rapidly growing proportions of the Sikh movement created some new problems. The reaction of the Muslim orthodoxy towards the Sikhs suffered a radical change. To begin with, their attitude was one of indifference or tacit resentment. But as the Sikh movement advanced, they began to see a danger in it and became openly hostile to it. The main reason for this changed attitude seems to be that the growth of Sikhism blocked the further progress of Islam in the Punjab. Islam had entered the Punjab in the wake of the Turkish armies of Mahmood of Ghazni. By now, most of the western Punjab had been Islamized and in the eastern Punjab, too, a sizable section of the population had accepted the creed of Islam. With the progress of Sikhism, which was also a missionary creed like Islam, the pace of Islamization was considerably slowed down, if not halted. The prospects of improved status which Islam offered to the lower sections of the Hindu society were now available from Sikhism as well, because Sikhism, too, like Islam made no distinction between the high and the low. In so far as Sikhism was closer to the roots of the Hindu culture, for the Hindu masses it had an edge over Islam. Therefore, those who wanted to change their religion with a view to improving their position in the society, preferred Sikhism to Islam. But it was not merely the entry of new people into Islam that suffered a setback and as a consequence, slowed down the pace of the spread of Islam; the spell of the Sikh Gurus was felt even in the ranks of Islam. Some of the Musalmans, generally former converts from Hinduism began to show more interest in Sikhism than in Islam.<sup>16</sup> It is possible that a few cases of reconversion also took place. All these trends naturally alarmed the orthodox elements of the Muslim population and they became progressively hostile to Sikhism.

However, the opposition of the Muhammadan orthodoxy

could cause no immediate harm to the Sikh movement on account of Akbar's policy of religious liberalism. The Emperor paid no heed to the complaints of the *mullās* and *qāzīs*, as his faith in them had been rudely shaken. Rather, he met some of the Sikh Gurus and showed his magnanimity towards them by making special royal grants. The present site of Amritsar was granted to Guru Amar Dās for his daughter when Akbar met the Guru at Goindwal. On a subsequent occasion the Emperor met Guru Arjan Dev at Goindwal on his way back to Agra and at his request remitted the land revenue of the area for a whole year. When the same Guru Arjan Dev was preparing the Sikh scripture, a serious complaint was made to the Emperor pointing out that there were in this work some derogatory references to Islam and its founder. The Emperor made a personal investigation into the matter and dismissed the complaint as unfounded. A few cases of tension also occurred occasionally, the earliest of them being between Guru Amar Dās's followers and the Pathans of Goindwal, but in the atmosphere of liberalism generated by Akbar's policy all these incidents were localized and the mischief could not spread.

Akbar's favourable attitude did not merely save Sikhism from the fury of the Muslim orthodoxy at a time when it was just an infant needing protection; it also provided the necessary conditions for its quick further progress. The strong and efficient administration of the Emperor established stable peace in the land, which enabled the Sikhs to march ahead unhindered by any local revolts and foreign invasions. The liberal character of the state allowed them full freedom to formulate and execute their plans of development. The goodwill of the state not only assured them of protection against the state or any individual or group of individuals interfering in their activities, but also helped them materially through the Emperor meeting the Sikh Gurus and making gifts and grants to them. These meetings and grants greatly enhanced the prestige of the Gurus in the estimation of the people in general, and were naturally instrumental in the

further advancement of the Sikh cause. The remission of land revenue by Akbar at the instance of Guru Arjan Dev made the people look up the head of the Sikh movement as their friends and benefactor, and opened the way for large-scale new admission to the ranks of Sikhism.

The electiveness of Akbar led to a sharp and even violent reaction among the conservative sections of the Muslim population. They viewed the Emperor's policy towards the non-Muslim as extremely dangerous both to their creed and state, because it was feared that it would give fresh encouragement and strength to the Hindus. In their opinion, any step which benefited the Hindus was anti-Islamic. The Rajput policy of the Emperor was resented for the reason that it boosted the enemies of the Muslim establishments. The emergence of any religious activity among the Hindus was regarded with suspicion and was attributed to the mistaken policy of their ruler. Thus, the rise of the Sikh movement to them was the growth of a dangerous heresy which needed to be nipped in the bud.

Gradually, the above-mentioned conservative reaction gave birth to a powerful Muslim revivalist movement with its headquarters at Sirhind. Muslim revivalist movement divine, Shaikh Faizi Sirhindi, "*Mujaddad-i-Alf Sani*", to whom even a slight concession to the Hindus was an act of hostility to Islam. He advocated the view that "the glory of Islam consists in the humiliation of infidelity and the infidels. Anyone who held an infidel in esteem, caused humiliation to Islam. Holding in esteem does not simply mean that one pays respect to them, or seats them in a higher position. Giving a place to them in one's company, sitting and talking with them, all are means of showing esteem. They (the infidels) should be kept at a distance like dogs."<sup>18</sup> About the *jazia* taken from the infidels he held that its real purpose was to humiliate them (the non-Muslims) and this humiliation should reach a stage where, owing to the fear of *jazia*, they should not be able to wear good clothes, and should never enjoy any peace of mind and be in constant dread and

fear of the king's taking away their property." He had no sympathy for those people who believed that Rāma and Rehman were the same. To him such a comparison was an act of extreme stupidity, because he was of the opinion that Rāma and Kṛṣṇana of the Hindus were no more than "the lowliest of sweeper"<sup>19</sup> His view about the Muslim *Shari'at* were very rigid, and he poured abuse upon everything that he did not understand or could not fit into his theology. He was thus the antithesis of Abul Fazal and was akin to Badauni in the desire "to imprison the mind in the narrowest theological vision." Naturally, he was a severe critic of Akbar's policy of tolerance towards the non-Muslims. He writes of the miserable condition of the Muslims under the Emperor and calls him "an enemy (lit. denier or forbiddler) of the Faith of Islam."<sup>20</sup>

The increasing influence of Shaikh Faizi Sirhindi and his orthodox views greatly added to the difficulties of the rising Sikh movement. His attitude towards the contemporary Sikh Guru Arjan Dev is evident from some of his letters. After the Guru had been executed by the orders of the Emperor Jehangir, the Shaikh wrote a letter to the Subedar of Lahore, Murtza Khan, saying,<sup>21</sup>

"Recently, a very good thing, the execution of the accursed infidel of Goindwal, has taken place, which has been cause of a great frustration to the wretched Hindus. By the intention or the purpose with which they are killed what it may, the humiliation of the infidels is a test of the seriousness of the Musalmans. This *fakir* (meaning himself), before the *kafir* was put to death, had seen a dream in which the ruler of the time had broken the skull of heathenism- and indeed he (fire-worshipper meaning *kafir*) was the chief of the heathens and the leader of the infidels."

Like the Muslim orthodoxy, the Hindu orthodoxy was also unhappy about the progress of Sikhism which was essentially anti-Brahmanical in character. The *brāhmaṇs* felt that owing to this new creed, their position was being undermined and that their hold on the Hindu masses had weakened. Therefore, they were severely critical of the Sikhs and their Gurus, and whenever any suitable chance arose, they utilized it to lodge complaints against

them with the state authorities. The preparation of a separate Sikh scripture by Guru Arjan Dev seriously upset them and they complained about it to the Emperor Akbar. Although the Emperor summarily dismissed the complaint, yet the very behaviour of the *brāhmaṇas* was an indirect encouragement to the Muhammandan detractors of the Sikhs. The personal factor played its role in strengthening the hands of the opponents of Sikhism. For instance, Prithi Chand,<sup>22</sup> the disgruntled elder brother and rival of Guru Arjan Dev indulged in all sorts of intrigues to damage the position of Guru Arjan Dev as the head of the Sikh movement. Through his machinations he even succeeded in inducing a government official, Sulhi Khan, to attempt an attack upon the Guru. The attack was, however, rendered abortive by the accidental fatal fall of Sulhi Khan into a live kiln on the way. The strong Sikh tradition regarding the intrigues of Dewan Chandu Mal of Lahore, who bore ill will to Guru Arjan Dev on account of the latter's refusal to accept the hand of his daughter for his (Guru's) son, Hargobind, also points to the part played by the personal factor in fortifying the anti-Sikh forces in the country. But neither the opposition of the *brāhmaṇas* nor the personal grudge of men like Prithi Chand and Chandu Mal may be regarded as a major cause of the crises that over took the Sikh movement in the time of Guru Arjan Dev. Such elements as these merely provided a subsidiary cause, the real cause being furnished by the hostile attitude of the Muhammandan orthodoxy headed by Suaikh Faizi of Sirhind.

The accession of Jehangir to the Mughal throne after the death of his father, Akbar, in 1605 turned the situation, somewhat, and for a time at least in favour of those who assailed the liberal trends in Akbar's policy. There were some powerful people at the court of his father who were opposed to this accession and favoured his son Khusrau, in preference to him. Even Akbar at one time had shared the same view, feeling sore as he did at the unfilial and rebellious conduct of Jehangir or Salim, as he was then called, during the evening of his life. At this critical juncture,

the orthodox detractors of his father's enlightened liberalism came to Jehangir's rescue and smoothed his way to the throne. Thus when he ascended the throne, he not only did not have his father's opposition to the Muslim orthodoxy but was also in a frame of mind to oblige them, should an opportunity arise, although from the twelve edicts<sup>23</sup> he issued immediately after his accession, it is evident that he never allowed their influence to get the better of him.

The required opportunity appeared when in 1606 Prince Khusrau, goaded by his frustrated ambition, rose in open revolt against his father, Jehangir, and hastened towards the Punjab in a bid to mobilize support for this cause. The Emperor gave the rebel prince a hot pursuit and reached Lahore post-haste, where unfortunate Khusrau was produced before him in chains by the commander of the pursuing army, Murtza Khan. The occasion was marked by the award to exemplary punishments to the supporters of the rebel. The name of the Sikh pontiff, Guru Arjan Dev, was included in the list of such people and immediate imperial orders were issued for his arrest, the arrest of his son and the confiscation of his property. The Guru was soon taken captive and brought to Lahore where he was sentenced to death by *siyast* and *yasa*, i.e. death by torture involving no bloodshed.

While giving an account of this affair in his *Memoirs*, Jehangir has advanced two reasons in justification of his action. The first reason is related to the context in which the action was taken, while the second refers to the meeting at Goindwal between Prince Khusrau and the Sikh Guru at which the latter is alleged to have communicated an exaggerated view of certain things to the former and have put a saffron-mark on his fore-head as an omen of good fortune. According to the Emperor himself, of the two reasons, the first is more important, rather the basic factor determining the decision. He says :

"At Goindwal which is situated on the bank of the River Biah (Bias) there lived a Hindu named Arjan. He was in the guise of a Pir or a Shaikh (religious head). Accordingly, having captivated by his



manners and etiquette many of the simple-minded Hindus, nay, of the ignorant and lowly Muslims, had beaten aloud the drum of his divinity and spiritual headship. People called him Guru. From all sides, fools and worshippers of fools in large numbers came to him and expressed their complete faith in him. This shop had been active for three or four generations. For a very long time I had been pondering that either this false shop should be exterminated or he (Guru Arjan) should be brought into the fold of Islam."<sup>24</sup> (*Tuzk-i-Jahangiri*)

The second cause, the Khusrau affair, as the Emperor puts it, merely precipitated the situation, having convinced him that the falsehood of the Guru had exceeded all limits and could go no further.

It may be contended on some hands that the order of precedence in which the Emperor presents his reasons may not be accepted as literally true, and that it may be just an exercise in casuistry to explain the severity of his action. However, whatever view may be held about the relative importance of the two causes mentioned by Jehangir, one thing is clear that the whole statement of his bears the imprint of orthodox thinking on the subject to the extent that even the ulemas would have envied him in posing the problem in such a forthright and unreserved manner. It is significant to remember that Murtza Khan, the then Governor of Lahore, who was so close to the Emperor on account of his meritorious services in the late expedition against Khusrau, enjoyed the goodwill and confidence of the Naqshabandi Leader of Sirhind, Shaikh Faizi, who was dead set against the Sikh movement in the Punjab.

The tragedy of Guru Arjan Dev's death in the summer of 1606 followed by the confinement of his son and successor, Guru Hargobind, produced a sharp reaction in the small but growing community of the Sikhs. There was a general wave of indignation and protest against the official high-handedness and tyranny, and the necessity of self-defence was strongly felt. Sensible of the mood of his people, Guru Hargobind, who ascended the *gurgaddi* in 1606, framed a programme of militarizing the community. He

put on two swords representing the *mīrī* (temporal) and *pīrī* (spiritual) powers of the Guru respectively, and announced that in future he would prefer offerings of arms and horse from his devotees. Arrangements were made for imparting to the Sikh training in the art of fighting, and a small contingent of warriors was built up. Hunting was practised, because it provided useful training in the exercise of war.

However, the measures introduced by Guru Hargobind, whatever their importance, did not mark any abrupt change. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, had condemned cowardliness and applauded the qualities of self-respect,<sup>25</sup> self-confidence and manliness. He had held justice to be the primary duty of the rulers, and had stressed their answerability to God and the people for their conduct and administration. He had expressed himself against the attitude of submission to an unjust ruler, dubbing it a shameful act. In the time of the succeeding Gurus certain stray incidents happened which awakened the Sikhs to a sense of danger from unfriendly government officials. In the time of Guru Arjan Dev as pointed out before, one of the officials, Sulhi Khan, became party to an intrigue, and actually set out on an expedition against the Guru, but he died in the act of doing so. Such incidents as these impressed upon the Sikhs the urgency of self-defence underlining the possession of such qualities as courage and knowledge of the technique of fighting. As a result of this new development, the need of Guru Nanak's ideology of self-respect and manliness was confirmed and reconfirmed. Guru Rām Dās encouraged the trading in horses in the belief that this would promote the qualities of good horsemanship in his followers. Guru Arjan dev proceeded further and was perhaps the first leader who envisaged the necessity of training in the use of arms. The Sikh tradition has it that his immediate successor, Guru Hargobind, received his military instruction from, Bhāi Budha, a prominent Sikh of Guru Arjan. This could be possible only if Bhāi Budha had himself been instructed in the military arts in the earlier period. The tradition of Guru Arjan sending,

on the eve of his martyrdom, instructions to his successor to sit fully armed on the *gurgaddī*, also points to the same conclusion.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless the assertion of Guru Hargobind that he combined in his person both *mīrī* and *pīrī* powers, was a new development of momentous importance, pregnant with great future possibilities. As the subsequent events were to show, this fact constituted the basis of the Sikh polity, that came into being during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even today, it is fundamental to the understanding of the Sikh politics.

Another important factor operating in the transformation of the Sikh movement was the entry of the Jāts in large numbers into the fold of Sikhism during the period of Guru Arjan Dev and after. These people were the descendants of certain tribes that had originally come from foreign lands and settled in the country and were known for their tribal freedom and fighting traits. They were naturally an assertive and virile people who only needed a competent and gifted leader to rouse them to action. Hargobind infused in them the confidence that they could even challenge the might of the Mughal Emperor. Large numbers of them answered the Guru's call to arms, recognizing in him the type of leader they desired. Their swelling the ranks of the Sikh community changed its complexion and necessitated certain readjustments within the system. The attitude of non-resistance, such as the one adopted by Guru Amar Dās towards the Muhammadans of Goindwal who constantly annoyed the Sikhs in various ways, "did not suit the temper and tradition of these people,"<sup>28</sup> so that a new attitude to acts of high-handedness and tyranny had to be formulated in the light of the racial heritage of the new entrants, the Jāts.

It is not known for certain when Guru Hargobind was imprisoned by Emperor Jehangir, though the fact of his imprisonment cannot be disputed. The probability is that he was arrested soon after his accession, and that his determination to meet the official challenge and his launching the programme of militarizing the Sikhs constituted the background of the

government's action. After some years-number not certain<sup>29</sup>- the Emperor realized the futility of keeping him any longer in the prison and released him. The incarceration of the Guru, however, made no difference to his plans of strengthening the defence potential of his community. Rather, his convictions were reconfirmed by the behaviour of the government and he addressed himself afresh and with great vigour to the noble task he had set himself at the time of his accession. His relations with the Emperor Jehangir were now better, and obviously there was no immediate danger to the Sikhs from the side of the government. But he took a long-range view of the problem and did not allow his personal relations with the Emperor to come in the way of his programme. The Guru also used the period of peace following upon his release from imprisonment to consolidate the ranks of his community. During the period he was in prison, the strings of discipline had greatly loosened and several selfish *masands* had arrogated to themselves powers that were never vested in them. They had become corrupt and strayed from the sphere of their proper functions. Some of them had begun to pose as *gurus* in their own right and had each raised a body of followers or devotees called *shehlang*.<sup>30</sup> Guru Hargobind thought it high time to penalize the corrupt missionaries and made a lesson of them to impress upon other functionaries of the same category a sense of the responsibility assigned to them. But this was not enough. So long as the institution of *caraṇāmrit* remained unchanged, the individual *masands* would continue to enjoy the privilege of initiation of new Sikhs by virtue of their having been so authorized by the central authority of the Guru. Guru Hargobind realized the defect inherent in this system and declared that in future any five good Sikhs could also prepare and administer *caraṇāmrit* and initiate people into the fold of Sikhism.<sup>31</sup> This measure did not end the order of the *masands*, nor was it intended to do so. But instituting of an alternative arrangement for the admission for new members into the community did, to a certain extent, erode the authority of the

*masands*. During the same period, the Guru travelled through the Punjab into Uttar Pradesh as far as Pilibhit and northwards into Kashmir. Along the route of his travels he had many new temples built and appointed missionaries for the dissemination of the Sikh teachings. Among his most renowned missionaries were Bābā Budha, Bābā Gurdittā and Bhāi Gurdās.

Jahangir died in 1627, Guru Hargobind had no trouble with him ever since his release from imprisonment, but the ease with which under the late Emperor's son and successor, Shah Jehan, a minor incident over a bird at Amritsar between the hunting parties of the Emperor and the Guru sparked off a series of armed clashes between the two sides, shows that the official attitude towards the Sikh movement had not basically changed. The Amritsar incident was immediately followed by an attack upon the Guru's residence at Amritsar, and the wrong-doer was a Mughal official, Mukhlis Khan. The Mughals did not achieve much success, but the Guru thought it prudent to leave Amritsar for the time being and retire into the Malwa region. There, too, he was not allowed to live in peace for long, and in 1631 a contingent of Mughal troops attacked him, but in the battle which took place at Lahira, the Mughals were beaten back. The victory thus gained encouraged the Guru and he returned to the north and took up his abode at Kartarpur, now in the Jullundur District. But it was not long before another armed clash occurred. The imperialists were led by Painde Khan. This time again they were defeated, and their leader was found among the slain. In spite of his victories, the Guru realized that with his slender resources, it was not possible for him to maintain forever an attitude of open defiance towards the rulers, and prudently retired to Kiratpur at the foot of the Shivalik Hills. This place being out of the way and at a distance from the main road leading from Delhi to Lahore offered a comparatively securer centre wherefrom to conduct the affairs of his still very young community.

Guru Hargobind was engaged in actual warfare for a few years only, but he had successfully faced heavy odds, which left a

deep mark upon the future course of the community's development. His "successes against innumerable odds could not but inspire the Sikhs with self-confidence and give them an exalted sense of their own worth. They had hitherto been kept under heels by the Musalmans, but now they learnt, for the first time, that under proper guidance and control, they could meet the Musalmans on an equal footing, or even gain the better. This consciousness of their own worth arising out of their own trying circumstances became a great national asset. Guru Hargobind demonstrated a possibility—the possibility of the Sikhs openly assuming an attitude of defiance against the Mughal Government—and considerably prepared the way for the thorough reformation that they received in the hands of Guru Gobind Singh."<sup>31</sup>

Another important result that flowed from the infusion of martial spirit into the community under the leadership of Guru Hargobind was that the Sikh movement hence forward, assumed a positively national character. The founder of the Sikh creed, Guru Nānak, had shown cultural awareness, no doubt, and had disfavoured the attempts of the Hindus at a blind imitation of the ways of their foreign rulers, but this cultural awareness did not immediately impart any national outlook to the Sikhs. As the movement advanced and the hostility of the Muslims towards it became evident, the Gurus and their followers drew closer to the grass-roots of the Indian Culture in an effort to get for their cause popular support. The process of reorientation of the Sikhs' outlook was greatly accelerated by the armed clashes occurring during the period of Guru Hargobind.

Guru Hargobind was succeeded in 1644 by the grandson Har Rāi who was the seventh in the line of succession from Guru Nānak. Unlike his predecessor, he was a man of a pacifist and retiring nature. But he shared his grandfather's view regarding the need of military preparedness, and maintained a body of people well trained in the use of arms. He also continued his predecessor's practice of hunting expeditions as a means of military training and morale-boosting. Simultaneously, he

attended to the demands of consolidation in the ranks of the community. He went round the different centres of his religion, reorganized them, wherever necessary, and set up a few new centres called *bakhshishes*<sup>33</sup> (bounties). During his tenure of Guruship some notable conversions were made among the landed families of Malwa. The ancestors of the ruling houses of Patiala, Nabha, and Jind are believed to be first converted to Sikhism during this period. If the Majha tract of the Punjab became Sikh under the spell of Guru Arjan Dev, its Malwa territory was initiated into Sikhism by the efforts of Gurus Hargobind and Har Rāi. Once the *chaudharis* or heads of some leading families of Malwa were converted, the ground was well set for the rapid spread of the Sikh faith in the region. The pace of progress in this direction was greatly accelerated during the periods of the Ninth and the Tenth Gurus.

The closing years of Guru Har Rāi's pontificate were marked by the revival of Mughal interference in the affairs of the Sikh community. There are two possible explanation of this development. First, Aurangzeb won the war of succession and ascended the Mughal throne in 1658. He was a staunch Muslim who believed with the Muslim orthodoxy, particularly of the Sirhindi or Naqshabandi brand, that the resurgence of Hindu movement in the country was dangerous to Islamic rule and need to be curbed forthwith. He had convinced himself that the establishment of an Islamic state in India was dire political necessity of the Mughlas. Naturally, therefore, he had scant respect or sympathy for the Sikh movement which had by now taken deep roots in the Punjab, and also was well set on the road to further progress. Secondly, the new Emperor was angry with Guru Har Rāi for the latter's open support to his elder brother and rival, Dara Shikoh. Dara, being of Sūfi persuasion, sought the company of saintly men of all denominations, and it was in this way that he had come to have some intimacy with the Sikh Guru. It is not clear, but the Sikh tradition has it, that when Dara, after his defeat at the hands of his enemy fled across the

Punjab, Guru Har Rāi, responding to his appeal for help, gathered the Sikh force, estimated at 2200 strong and tried to cover up his retreat as against Aurangzeb's pursuing troops. This aroused the wrath of Aurangzeb who, on the conclusion of hostilities, summoned Har Rāi to Delhi to explain his conduct. The whole of this story does not seem to be correct, for in the case of its being true, the action of the Mughal Emperor would have been very stern, and not simply a summon to Delhi for an explanation. At the same time, the fact that he stated interfering in the Sikh affairs so soon after his action indicates that there must be something more than his mere hatred of the movement to prompt his action. When summoned by the Emperor, Guru Har Rāi, instead of proceeding personally to the Capital, sent his elder son, Rām Rāi, to answer the queries of the Emperor. The old charge which had been levelled in the time of Guru Arjan and dismissed by the Emperor Akbar as totally unfounded, was now revived, alleging that the Sikh *Granth* contained derogatory references to Islam and its founder, prophet Muhammad. Rām Rāi failed to show firmness of character and distorted facts to furnish answer which should please rather than offend the Emperor. Aurangzeb, on his part, used the opportunity to win over Rām Rāi. He was the older son of Guru Har Rāi and was likely to succeed his father. In winning him over, therefore, the Mughal ruler cherished the hope of bringing the prospective Guru under his thumb. Guru Har Rāi disapproved of Rām Rāi's conduct and disowning him, appointed his younger son, Har Krishan to Guruship after him.

The appointment of Har Krishan by his father as his successor was fully in conformity with the succession practice as observed since the time of Guru Rām Dās. Prior to Guru Rām Dās, succession was open to the entire Sikh *sangat* (congregation) and a successor was chosen irrespective of whether or not he belonged to the family of the Guru in office. From Guru Rām Dās onwards the Guruship assumed a hereditary character, as all such institutions in those days would tend to do. But though



the choice hence forward was limited to the male members of the family of the Guru, there was no rule as to which of them was more entitled to the office of the Guru than others. Guru Rām Dās selected his youngest son, Arjan Dev. Guru Arjan Dev had no difficulty as he had only one son. Guru Hargobind had five sons out of whom three predeceased him. The remaining two were passed over in favour of a grandson (younger son of the deceased Bābā Gurdittā). Guru Har Rāi, as we have seen selected his younger son, Har Krishan, in preference to Rām Rāi, his elder son. Guru Har Krishan, later on, selected his grandfather's brother, Guru Tegh Bahādur, as the next Guru.

This succession practice, though quite normal to that age, had led to the growth of some splinter groups with in the ranks of the community, such as the Minas and the Dhīrmalias. The Minas were the descendants of Prithi Chand, the eldest son of the fourth Guru whereas the Dhīrmalias were the descendants of Dhīrmal, a grandson of Guru Hargobind. Both Prithi Chand and Dhīrmal were disappointed claimants to Guruship and had endeavoured to set up rival gurudoms of their own. Now a third splinter group was in the process of formation. This was to be known as Rāmraias after the name of Rām Rāi.

Rām Rāi was very sore over his supersession in the matter of succession. Being at the Imperial Court and having good relations with the Emperor at the time, he thought that he could turn the tables upon his younger brother, who, he believed, had usurped his right of becoming the Guru, through the support of Aurangzeb, and thus made an appeal for the Emperor's intervention. The Emperor was willing to help Rām Rāi because he, for his own reason, preferred a man of his own choice and thought that a puppet Guru would most suit his interests.

Guru Har Krishan was then summoned to Delhi. The Guru obeyed the orders of the Emperor, went to Delhi and there put up at the house of Mirza Rājā Jai Singh (situated at the present site of Banglā Sāhib). Probably, the Emperor received good reports about him through Jai Singh, and may be from some

other sources as well, he hesitated to take any decision in haste. It is also possible that this hesitation on the part of Aurangzeb was due to his realization of the futility of imposing an unwanted Guru on the Sikhs. Shortly afterwards Guru Har Krishan was stricken with small-pox and died.

The vacant Guruship went neither to Dhīrmal nor to Rām Rāi, both extremely impatient for this exalted office, but to Tegh Bahādur, a younger son of the sixth Guru, Hargobind who was, at the time of his nomination, living in the District of Amritsar. His accession was violently contested by the rival claimants. Dhīrmal tried to have him murdered. Fortunately, the assassin he had hired failed to execute his mission. Guru Tegh Bahādur left Bakālā for Amritsar. There the doors of the Harimandir were slammed in his face by the *masands*. From Amritsar he went to Kiratpur, the town built by his father. Here, too, he found no respite. Shortly afterwards, he bought a hillock near the village of Makhowal, five miles north to Kiratpur, and laid the foundation of a new settlement there. However, he did not stay at Makhowal for long, and set out on his travels eastwards through the Malwa and Bangar areas. His mother and wife travelled with him, besides a considerable following of devotees who gave his camp the appearance of the moving court of a chief. When he arrived in the vicinity of Delhi, Rām Rāi, who was still in attendance at the Mughal Court, had him arrested as a imposter and a disturber of the peace. Through the intercession of Rājā Rām Singh, son of Rājā Mirzā Jai Singh of Amber, the charge was dropped, and the Guru allowed to proceed on his way.

During his eastward journey, Guru Tegh Bahādur passed through some major centres of Hindu religion, such as Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, etc. At Patna, he left his family and proceeded further to Bengal and Assam either alone or in the company of Rājā Ram Singh of Amber who had been deputed by Aurangzeb at the head of a military expedition to put down a local revolt in Assam. He spent some years in these areas, and visited important places like Duacca and Chittagong. It was probably in 1671 that

he suddenly cut short his visit and hastened back to the Punjab, breaking his journey for a while at Patna to meet his family and to see his new-born child, Gobind Râi. He did not even wait for his family to accompany him.

The reason that he wanted to get back to the Punjab so quickly was the increasing amount of uneasiness in the minds of the people on account of the element of intolerance in the religious policy of the Emperor Aurangzeb. In 1669 orders were issued by Aurangzeb "to demolish all schools and temples of the infidels and to put down their religious practices and teaching."<sup>34</sup> The magnificent and time-honoured temples of Mathura and Banaras were demolished and the *jizya* reimposed on the non-Muslims. The customs duty on Musalmans was abolished, rewards were given to converts, and severe restrictions were placed on public celebrations. In the words of Jadu Nath Sarkar<sup>35</sup>, "a systematic plan was followed for carrying out the policy of iconoclasm. Officers were appointed in all the subdivisions and cities of the Empire to enforce the regulations of Islam, such as the suppression of the use of wine and *bhang*, and of gambling. The destruction of Hindu places of worship was one of their chief duties, and so large was the number of officers employed in the task that a Director-General had to be placed over them to guide their activity." The Sikhs got no better treatment. "Aurangzeb ordered the temples of the Sikhs to be destroyed and the Guru's agents (*masands*) for collecting the tithes and the presents of the faithful to be expelled from the cities."<sup>36</sup> The indictment of Aurangzeb by Jadu Nath may be, and perhaps is a little too severe. Things were never so bad as depicted by him. In the total reign of fifty years there were only about 250 conversion, an insignificant number, considering the temper of the day. Even so, it is to be admitted that when new policy was first launched in 1669, there was widespread panic in the country among the non-Muslims. The reports of this panic reached Guru Tegh Bahadur while in Assam and he immediately took the decision of being with his people in their hour of great agony and suffering.

With the return of the Guru to the Punjab began the period of this crowing glory. Refusing to sit idle at his headquarters, he resolved to move among his people. During his travels large crowds of people gathered around him and sought solace and guidance from him. His exhortation to them was to face the situation with courage and firmness. His motto, "*bhai kāhu ko det nahi nahi bhai mānatān*"<sup>37</sup> (fear not, frighten not) had deep effect on the panic-stricken minds of the people. A Muslim leader, Hafiz Adim, and some prominent *zamindārs* of the region also joined hands with him. The Guru's bearing was of a mighty warrior; indeed, it had been so from the very first. He had not given up the militant tradition of his father. He took delight in hunting, and among his favourite gifts were swords and arrows. The sense of mission with which he undertook his extensive tour of the countryside and deep impact of his teaching on the people alarmed the official circles. Soon after this the Guru was arrested along with a few of his most devoted followers. They were taken to Delhi where they were charged with dangerous activities. They were offered a choice between Islam and death, and on their spurning conversion outright, the Guru was beheaded whereas his companions. Bhāi Dayāl and Bhāi Mati Dās, were boiled and sawn alive respectively.

Guru Tegh Bahādur thus died a people's hero, a defender of his faith, and fighter against insensate tyranny. In the words of Guru Gobind Singh,<sup>38</sup> son and successor of Guru Tegh Bahādur :

*"To protect their right to wear their caste marks and  
sacred threads"*<sup>39</sup>

*Did he, in the Dark Age, perform, the supreme sacrifice;*

*To help the saintly he went to the utmost limit;*

*He gave his head but never cried in pain,*

*He suffered martyrdom for the sake of his faith;*

*He lost his head, but revealed not his secret;*

*He disdained to perform miracles or juggler's tricks,*

*For such fill men of God with shame;*

*He burst the bonds of mortal clay,  
 And went to the abode of God,  
 No one hath ever performed as act as noble as his.  
 Tegh Bahādur passed, the world was with sorrow stricken;  
 A wail of horror rent the earth;  
 A victor's welcome given by the hosts of heaven."*

Guru Tegh Bahādur's execution "undoubtedly strengthened the resistance against the religious policy of Aurangzeb and at the same time prepared the way for the final stage in the evolution of Sikhism."<sup>40</sup> "In his death, the Guru surpassed anything he had done in life. He was known throughout upper India, was highly revered by Rajput princes and was actually worshiped by the peasantry of the Punjab. His execution was universally regarded by the Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith."<sup>41</sup>

The immediate effect of the execution of Guru Tegh Bahādur, however, was terrific and stunning for the Sikhs. There were still, no doubt, daring spirits like Lakhi Shāh and Bhāi Jaita who could risk their all for the sake of their beloved Guru, and despite their small number, be a source of inspiration to the weaker spirits. But a large majority of the Sikhs were utterly bewildered and bedevilled as a result of the traumatic shock, and the general situation of the community indeed seemed gloomy and sombre. A striking glimpse of this sad state of affairs was provided by some of the followers of Guru Tegh Bahādur at Delhi for swearing their faith in the face of Mughal interrogation and repression.

The intensity of the shock of the Delhi executions was greatly enhanced by the absence of unity and cohesion in the ranks of the Sikhs about this time. We have already referred to the Minas, the Dhīrmalias and the Rāmraias. They were all dissenters who had set up gurudoms of their own and were engaged on an all-out campaign of vilification against the mainstream of Sikhism. The circumstances of the last decade and a half had been particularly very helpful to them. The fissiparous and centrifugal activities found a hospitable climate. Guru Har Krishan, who succeeded his father Guru Har Rāi in 1661, was just an infant of

five years at the time of his succession. More over, he had to spend most of his time at Delhi where his elder brother Rām Rāi was intriguing against him with Aurangzeb. Guru Tegh Bahādur who succeeded him in 1664 experienced constant difficulties at the hands of the rival groups and spent much of his time touring outside the Punjab in what are not known as Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, and Assam. On his return from the tour he threw himself, heart and soul, into the struggle against the anti-non-Muslim policy of the emperor Aurangzeb. The long absence of Guru Teg Bahādur from the Punjab and later, his continued pre-occupation with the resistance of the Government's tyranny helped the splinter groups to promote their interests further. They either appointed their own *masands*, or tempered with the loyalty to the existing *masands*, to strengthen their hold on the people. For the *masands*, too, this was an opportunity too valuable to be missed. To all intents and purposes not all, but most of them, asserted their independence of the Sikh Centre, built up their own following became corrupt, and extorted offerings from the Sikhs in utter disregard of the spirit of the Guru's teachings. The collections were misappropriated in most of the cases and only a small fractions of them, if at all, reached the coffers of the Guru.

A disintegrated and disunited organization, such as the Sikh community was at the death of Guru Tegh Bahādur, could hardly be expected to meet the challenge of the mighty Mughal government. In the recent executions of a Sikh Guru and some notable Sikhs, the Mughals had shown their hand in unmistakable terms, creating thereby a question of life and death for the new community. A state of confrontation with the Government was there and if the Sikhs were to survive, they could afford to ignore it only at their own risk.

Fortunately, Guru Gobind Singh, son and successor of Guru Tegh Bahādur, was a great organizer, and had the vision imagination and magnetism of a great leader. His grasp of the issues was firm and clear. He had also a clear understanding of

the remedies that could resolve these issues and defeat the nefarious designs of the oppressor.

He embarked upon his difficult task of reorganizing and rejuvenating his people so as to fit them for all eventualities with a definite mission, which in his own words was as follows<sup>42</sup> :

"I came to the World charged with the duty to uphold the right in every place and to destroy the wicked and the evil. O ye holy men, know it well in your hearts that the only reason I took birth was to see that the righteousness may flourish : that the good may live and tyrants be torn out by their roots.

True to his heroic mission, he put the ideal of *dharmayuddha* before the people. They were exhorted to live and die for the cause of *dharma* or righteousness. The Sikh concept of the Supreme Being was reinterpreted emphatically, bringing out His martial attributes. That God helped and protected His dear ones or the good, and destroyed the evil was an old recognized strand of the Sikh metaphysics. Guru Gobind Singh not only laid more emphasis on this strand than was the case before but also evolved the idea further. He envisaged God as a mighty, invincible warrior armed to the teeth and ever ready to use his powers in support of the good. History abounds in examples where He saved his people from the clutches of wicked tyrants. Goddess Durgā or *Chaṇḍī* was commissioned by Him to help the gods to destroy their enemies, the demons. Subsequently, several *avatāras* such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa were, sent to wage war against tyranny. Guru Gobind Singh also viewed himself in the role of a saviour divinely commissioned to uphold the cause of the weak and the oppressed.

To inculcate the martial spirit of heroism in the minds of the people he ransacked the old Indian literature with the help of a number of poets and scholars living at his court, and brought out the heroic tradition enshrined therein. The most important of these works is *chaṇḍī di Vār* which is a free rendering in Punjabi of an old saga heroism. The virile and martial style of the blank verse indicates the extent to which the purpose of the attempt has been fulfilled.

Martial valour and weapons of war go hand in hand. The

Guru regarded weapons as object of great sanctity and inculcated the idea of their worship. He even deified them and identified them with God. Hence he used such names of God as *sarabloh* (All Steel) and *khadāgketu* (Emblem of the Sword).

But weapons of war were not merely to be worshipped. They were to be used, and their use was to be learnt through the hard way of training and practice. Therefore, soon after his accession in 1675 Guru Gobind Singh started training his followers in the use of arms as well as in the technique of fighting. Like his grandfather, Guru Hargobind, he showed preference for offerings of horses, weapons and other things that might be useful in fighting. He also got prepared a big drum and named it *Ranjit-Nagādā*. The Sikhs at Makhowal were trained to observe their daily programme to the beat of this drum. This device was useful in imparting to the Sikh ranks the qualities of regularity and discipline. From the beginning of his career, the Guru was very particular about going on hunting expeditions. Such exercises, he believed, were useful for learning war manoeuvres. In a short time he had the nucleus of a body of trained warriors. In fact, this idea of practising people in the art of fighting was no innovation introduced by him. It was simply a continuation of the tradition which had come down to him from the time of the Sixth Guru through the succeeding Gurus. However, the degree of emphasis laid on this aspect under him was far greater than had been the case ever before.

When the above-mentioned measures were in progress, alongside of them Guru Gobind Singh endeavoured to secure solidarity with the hill chiefs of Rajput extraction. They were known for their gallantry, and also had some valuable resources at their command. Besides, the hold of the Mughal government over them was not complete, and there was a possibility that with a little support and guidance from outside they would like to throw away completely the yoke of the Mughal overlordship. But the Guru's experience with them for some years convinced him



that they might be a liability rather than an assent to him. These hill chiefs were tradition-bound and caste-ridden, and too much entangled in their petty politics to be exposed to the inspiration of any high national ideal. Rather, they got alarmed by the growing influence of the Guru as also by his social reforms which equated the high-born with the low-born.

The hostility of the Rajput princes made the Guru pay greater heed to Anandpur. Anandpur was strategically a much better place than Paunta in the state of Nahan. That is why after about three years only, the Guru had returned to Anandpur. But Anandpur, too, lost much of its natural security, the moment the hill chiefs became unfriendly towards the Guru. Hence the urgency of fortifying the town and building some forts to strengthen its defences arose. The forts built there, namely Anandgarh, Kesgarh, Fatehgarh, Holgarh and Lohgarh were all situated on carefully selected sites in and around the town.

The creation of the Khālsā was the crowning event of Guru Gobind Singh's life from the standpoint of both organization and ideology. Organizationally. It completely eliminated the need of the order of the *masands*. The *masand system* had become corrupt, decrepit and creaky, and needed to be replaced immediately by a better system. But so long as *caranāmrit* (nectar prepared by a toewash) remained the mode of initiating new aspirants into the fold of Sikhism, *masands* could not be completely done away with. The introduction of *kaṇḍe di pahul* (nectar prepared by stirring a *khaṇḍa* i.e. two edged sword in it) by Guru Gobind Singh rendered the washing of the toe for *amrit* preparation unnecessary. As the new baptism could be administered by any five good Sikhs (called *pañj piyāre*) the elements of sole dependence upon a few individuals, such as the *masands*, was removed. After this step was taken, it was not difficult to abolish the order of the *masands* publicly, and this was soon done but the Guru was not content with that. He caught hold of some of the *masands* and made a public example of punishing

them. He also inserted in the *rahit* code of the *khālsā* that any kind of association with the *masands* was forbidden.

Ideologically, the creation of the *Khālsā* aimed at a well-balanced combination of the ideals of *bhakti* and *shakti*, of moral and spiritual excellence and militant valour or heroism of the highest order. The use of a double-edge sword in the preparation of the *amrit* (nectar) was psychological booster. The changing of names at the time as part of the new mode of the baptism was also intended to revolutionize the psyche of the Sikhs. All names of the baptized Sikhs were now to end in the uniform appellation of *singh* meaning 'lion', "thus making lions of humble disciples and raising them with one strike to a position of equality with the noblest and most war like class in India, for up to that time only the Rajputs bore the exalted title of Singh." "They were now to feel as good and as great as the members of the Solar and the Lunar dynasties."<sup>43</sup>

Still another means to promote the spirit of martial valour among the Sikhs was the inclusion in the code of the *Khālsā* of an injunction for the compulsory wearing of arms, *kirpān* being one and the most important of them.

Further, the Guru impressed the *Khālsā* with the belief that they were under the special control and protection of God. "They were taught an article of faith to believe that God was always present in the general body of the *khālsā* and that wherever even five Sikhs were assembled, the Guru would be with them."<sup>44</sup> They were also told that they were born to conquer. The new salutation given to the Sikhs was *wāheguru ji kā khālsā wāheguru ji ki fateh* (the Lord's is the *Khālsā*, the Lord's is the victory.) The Guru by this means, instilled into the minds of his followers the idea that they were the chosen instrument of God and must win, whatever be the odds against them; on wonder, then, that the *singhs* of Guru Gobind Singh, thus leavened, did not hesitate to dare all and risk all.

But the *singhs* were not to be merely soldiers. It was

imperative that they must at the same time be saints, deeply devoted to God, singing His hymns as composed by the Gurus, observing the daily religious discipline prescribed in the *rahit* of the khālsā and bearing a high moral character. There was no contradiction between the twin ideals of soldiering and saintliness. In fact, they were complementary to each other. Spiritual and moral values had to be protected with military strength, if they were to be saved for humanity. In the same way, military strength needed to be guided and directed by goals set by high moral and spiritual values, otherwise there was a likelihood of its being misused.

While creating the khālsā, Guru Gobind Singh did not forget to confer upon it a mark of distinctiveness in the form of unshorn hair of the body. Without any cost, this measure not only gave the Sikhs a manly bearing suited to the ideology in which they were nurtured, but also made it impossible for them in future to conceal their identity as some Sikhs at Delhi had done at time of Guru Tegh Bahādur's execution.

All these measures helped to frustrate the centrifugal forces that were in operation in the ranks of the Sikh community at the time of Guru Gobind Singh's accession. The community was now united and integrated as never before. All members of the community enjoyed equal privileges with one another, and there was no high and low, so far as rights were concerned. Nor was the Guru superior to them, for by receiving *amrit* from the *panj piyāre* he had exploded the myth of his superiority to his followers. This equality of privileges with one another and with the Guru, common external appearance, common leadership and the community of aspirations bound the Sikhs together into a compact mass, raising their strength manifold.

Neither the hill chiefs of the neighbourhood nor the Mughal government could tolerate the great revolution that the Sikh Guru had effected with such tremendous success. Therefore, they combined with the avowed object of destroying his power and

laid siege to Anandpur. The Guru gallantly held out for several months, but finally the people around him, overcome by a feeling of despair at the continually worsening situation, appealed to him to quit the place. Accepting their appeal, he quietly marched out on a cold, rainy and dark December night of 1705, but he was soon overtaken at a place called Chamkaur, where a day-long bloody battle raged between the two sides. The Guru, however, could not be captured, and he escaped into the interior of the Malwa region. The enemy was still in pursuit of him, and another armed clash took place at what is now called, Muktsar. Here the victory sided with the Guru and the enemy beat a hasty retreat. About this time, wishing to settle the matter diplomatically, he wrote a letter in Persian verse, *zafarnāmā*, to emperor Aurangzeb, making a bold protest against the attitude of the local Government officials. The Emperor invited him to a personal interview in the Deccan. The Guru set out to the south to meet the Emperor, but on the way when the news of his death reached him, he retraced his steps and proceeded to Delhi. He met the new emperor, Bahādur Shāh, at Agra. The Emperor treated him with great honour and distinction, but with regard to the issues raised by him, always counselled him with patience. When the emperor set out towards Rajputana, and later, marched from Rajputana towards the Deccan, the Guru accompanied him and reached Nanded in the Deccan. By then, he had made careful study of the political situation in Rajputana and in the south, and had also observed the inside decay of the Mughal structure. A conviction had grown upon him that the Mughal empire had lost its grip on the country and was disintegrating. With this conviction in his mind, he abandoned the idea of pursuing the negotiations with the emperor any longer, and decided to send Bandā Singh, A *bairāgī sādhu*, of Nanded recently converted to Sikhism, along with a few other prominent Sikhs to the Punjab to take what action he could against the enemies of the Khālsā. A little before the party of Bandā Singh left for the north, the Guru

was stabbed fatally by a Muhammadan assassin, probably hired by the Faujdar of Sirhind, Nawab Wazir Khan. This incident must have also added to the urgency of an early action of the type visualized by the Guru. Bandā Singh, on arriving in the Punjab, mobilized a large fighting force, captured Sirhind (capital of Sirhind sub-division) and established the first independent Khālsā state.

Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last at Nanded on October 7, 1708. A day before his death he made the historic announcement abolishing the line of personal guruship and conferring the powers of deliberation upon the Khālsā. By this act of investiture, individual leadership was replaced by collective leadership. The khālsā, whatever its discipline, was before this act a dependent organization. Guru Gobind Singh had, no doubt, visualized a great role for it from the time of its creation. He had volunteered to receive, and had received, baptism from the *pañj piyāres* (Five Beloved Ones who were the first to be initiated into the order of the Khālsā) and he had also sung high praises of it. But the step which changed the Khālsā into a sovereign body with the power to shape the destiny of the nation, a commonwealth, was the momentous declaration at Nanded.

Guru Gobind Singh was, thus, the last of the line of the Sikh Gurus. The ending of the line with his death was a deliberate act, and was the outcome of a position of strength rather than that of weakness, as it is usually the case in history. His pontificate, though coming at the end of the line, may rightly be regarded as the period of culmination in the development of Sikhism under the Gurus. He completed the evolution of the Sikh *sangat*. In the beginning, it was merely a religious gathering of devotees, functioning more or less in isolation. Gradually, there was an increase in its functions, and the isolation of one from another was lessened by the forging of common links, such as the preparation of a scripture, the building up of certain religious centres, institution of *manjīs* and *masands* as the agencies of the

central leadership and the assertion of the principle of the supremacy of the Guru. With the foundation of the Khālsā the new-work of semi-integrated *sangats* was fully integrated. The investing of the Khālsā with supreme powers later on, marked completion of the historical process long underway. Guru Gobind Singh also completed the social and religious revolutions inaugurated by Guru-Nānak. The successor of Guru Nānak had guided these revolutions with great devotion and ability. Yet there were some lapses to be seen at the time of Guru Gobind Singh's accession. The creation of the Khālsā by Guru Gobind Singh's was not merely an endeavour to integrate the members of his community, it was also and as much a powerful bid to carry to completion his predecessor's revolution in the fields of social and religious life. The code of conduct prescribed for the newly-created Khālsā was so devised as to impose a strict discipline on the Sikhs so as to ensure firm adherence on their part to the lofty ideals of Sikhism. Still another respect in which he brought to completion the development of an important old institution was the evolution of the Sikh scriptures. Guru Arjan Dev had accomplished a Herculean task by authenticating the diverse compositions and preparing a single holy book for the benefit of his people. But since then the work had remained where it was left. Guru Gobind Singh included in it the *salokas* of his father and put the seal of finality on it. Subsequently, this finalized version of the *Ādi Granth* was invested with Guruship.

But the period of Guru Gobind Singh was not merely a period of culmination. It was also a period of beginnings. By his reforms, and under the impact of his dynamic and magnetic leadership, the Sikh community was not only strengthened but also converted into a great vehicle of revolution. Cunningham writes.<sup>45</sup> : "The last apostle of the Sikhs effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty though fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by

Nānak." In the words of Narang<sup>46</sup>: "Though he did not break the shackles that bound his nation, he had set their souls free and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and ascendancy. He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by Muslim tyranny." The Khālsā accepted the challenge of the powerful Mughal Empire and embarked upon a national struggle of liberation. The first independent Khālsā state was created within two years of Guru Gobind Singh's death. This success, however, proved short-lived, and moreover, provoked the Government to follow a policy of ruthless persecution towards the Sikhs. But the Khālsā ultimately won the struggle against the Mughals and later, against their successors, the Afghans, and established their sovereign rule in the Punjab in the beginning of the sixties of the eighteenth century.

### NOTES & REFERENCES

1. Guru Nānak, *Asā di Vār*, *Guru Granth*, p.472; *Dhanāsri*, *Guru Granth*, p. 663.
2. Guru Nānak, *vār sārang*, *Guru Granth*, p. 1245; *sacred writings of the sikhs*, p.116.
3. *Guru Granth*, p. 62, *Sri Rāg Ashtpadian*, Mahalā 1.
4. Guru Nānak, *Mājh ki Vār*, *Guru Granth*, p. 141.
5. Excluding Guru Nānak's travels in the Punjab, there were three long tours of his. The first was eastward as far as Bengal and Assam and after that, southward as far as Ceylon. It is believed to have taken him twelve long years. The second tour was northward. During this the Guru visited Kashmir, Ladakh and other hilly areas of the neighbourhood. The third and the last tour was associated with some west Asian countries, such as Sindh, Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.
6. Guru Nānak, *Asā di Vār*, *Guru Granth*.
7. For details see Teja Singh, *Sikhism—its Ideals and Institutions*, p.40.
8. There is no specific mention of it in any of the Janamsākhis, but if the last two or three pages of *Janamsākhi*, Bābā Meharbān, are

read closely, no doubt about the existence of *langar* is left.

9. Indubhushan Benerjee, *Evolution of the Khālsā*, Vol. 1 (second edition), p. 146.
10. Trumpp, *Adi Granth*, LXXVII, quoted in I. Banerjee, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. I, p. 146.
11. Mohsin Fani in his work "Dabistan-i-Mazahib" (written during the earlier part of the seventeenth century) has given many examples to show how deeply the Sikhs of these days were devoted to their Gurus. For details see *Punjab Past and Present*, vol. I, No. 1, pp. 50-71.
12. According to Teja Singh, the *manjis* corresponded to the dioceses and *pirhis* to the parishes of the Roman Catholic Church. *Sikhism—its Ideals and Institution*. p. 42.
13. *Caraṇāmrit* was a spiritual master's nectar prepared with his toe wash to the accompaniment of some sacred hymns.
14. Mohsin Fani, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, p. 233; *Makhaz-i-Twarikh-i-Sikhan*, edited by Ganda Singh, P. 33.
15. *Ibid*.
16. There is a definite reference to it in *Tuzk-i-Jahangiri*. See for details, *Makhaz-i-Twarikh-i-Sikhan*, edited by Ganda Singh p. 21.
17. Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khalasat-ut-Twarikh*, p.425; *Makhaz-i-Twarikh-i-Sikhan*, edited by Ganda Singh. p. 59.
18. *Maktubat-i-Ima-i-Rabbani*, vol. I, letter no. 163. Also see Irfan Habib's article on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Enquiry* no. 5.
19. *Ibid*, letter no. 69.
20. *Ibid*, letter no. 47.
21. *Ibid*, letter no. 193.
22. Before him also there were many disappointed claimants to guruship among the sons of the preceding Gurus, but none of them had taken his grievance so seriously and made himself so active and vocal a dissenter as Prithi Chand did.
23. They were twelve in number. In them, among other things, he stressed his respect for the sun and forbade animal slaughter on Thursday and Sunday. For details see, *Tuzki-i-Jahangiri*, edited by Saiyid Ahmad. p. 4.
24. See *Makhaz-i-Twarikh-i-Sikhan*, p. 21.
25. Guru Nānak, *Ramakli Ashtpadian*, *Guru Granth*, p. 903.
26. There is a reference to this incident in one of the hymns of Guru



- Arjan Dev. See Guru Arjan, *bilāwal Rāg, Guru Granth*. p. 825.
27. Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khālsā*, vol.II, p. 44.
  28. Ibid.
  29. According to Mohsin Fani, author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, The duration of imprisonment was 12 years; according to I. Banerjee 5 years; according to Sikh accounts it ranged between two years and forty days. It is, at this stage rather difficult to say which of these views is correct.
  30. Mohsin Fani, *op. cit.* p. 333; *Makhaz-i-Twarikh-i-Sikhan*, p. 34.
  31. *Prem Sumārg*. edited by Randhir Singh, Introduction. p. 13.
  32. Indubhushan Banerjee, *op. cit.*, vol.;,II, p. 34.
  33. For details see Teja Singh, *Sikhism-its-Ideals and Institutions*, pp.72-73.
  34. Indubhusan Banerjee. *op. cit.*, vol. II, P. 58, J.N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, vol. III. p. 265.
  35. Ibid. Vol. III, p. 265.
  36. *Khafi Khan* (II, 652), quoted in J.N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, vol. III. p. 212.
  37. Guru Tegh Bahādur, *Salok* 16, *Guru Granth*. p. 1427.
  38. Guru Gobind Singh, *Bacitra Nātak*, S.G.P.C., Amritsar 1954. p. 58.
  39. This should not be taken to mean that the Guru actually put on any *tilak* mark or wore any *janeu* (Hindu sacred thread). His fight was for a principle, the right of wearing them, and for the cause of the oppressed which was to him a cause of righteousness. Incidentally, it is indicative of the Sikh's cultural solidarity with the Hindus, and of the extent to which the Sikh movement, in the course of years, had assumed a national complexion in confrontation with the Mughal government.
  40. I. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 63.
  41. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. IV, p. 332.
  42. Guru Gobind Singh. *Bacitra Nātak*. p. 71.
  43. Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism* (5th edition), p. 84.
  44. *Ibid.* *op. cit.*, p. 83.
  45. Cunningham, *A History of Sikhs*, S. Chand & Co., Delhi. 1955, p. 75.
  46. G.C. Narang, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

## II THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF SIKHISM

Trilochan Singh

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### PRINCIPLES OF THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF SIKHISM

The world theology, derived from Greek *theos* (God) and *logos* (word or utterance), means, "theory about God or rational utterance and discourse about God or gods." The term first appears in Plato's *Republic* (bk. II, chap. 18) with reference to poetry. According to Plato, norms must be prescribed to which poetry must conform in matters of theology. Theology thus meant telling stories about the gods which in Sikh scriptures is also called *kathā-kahānī* (disputation through narrative or philosophic reflection), or *akath-kahānī*<sup>1</sup> (ineffable story of religious doctrines). Plato's *Timaeus* exercised a profound influence over medieval Christian theologian. In his *Metaphysics* (bk. vi, chap. 1, sec. 19) Aristotle mentions three sciences : mathematical, physical and theological. Here theology corresponds roughly to what we mean by metaphysics today.

In the West, up to the time of Abelard (A.D. 1079-1142) the term theology was associated with heathenism and Greek philosophy by Christians, though it was earlier used by Gregory. Abelard was the first to change the meaning of the word, and since then, it has been taken to mean "study of Christian doctrines of God, displayed in Holy scriptures and the Church." It is on this basis that the *oxford English Dictionary* defines theology as "the study or science which treats of God. His nature and attributes and His relation with man and the universe." Not only Plato and Aristotle, but also the Stoics, the Neo-Platonists, the Scholastics, British empiricists, rationalists, German idealists and American thinkers like Royce, Browne, Hocking and Whitehead have all

dealt seriously and constructively with the central problem of God, Nature and Existence.

From the point of view of Sikhism, here is the most appropriate definition of theology : "Theology, in the comprehensive sense of the name, embraces so much of philosophy as is concerned with explanation of the world in terms of a supreme Mind or Spirit, with the being and attributes of the Deity and His relation to Nature and Man and with the grounds and limits of knowledge or belief as to such matters. It also includes the comparative study of religions and the psychology of religious experience."<sup>2</sup> "For the theistic philosopher or theologian," says Georgbe D. Kipatrick, "theology remains the queen of the sciences, while for the atheist philosopher it is an illusion."

Theology is thus a statements of the truths which have proved themselves to be working values of a given religion. It strives to present the experiences and doctrines of a religion in an intelligible form so to serve as a bond of exercising religious community. Speculative theology, also called Natural theology seeks to raise religious doctrines to a philosophical form by exercising a free criticism upon them. The theologian unfolds a world view based on religious postulates, but for which he also claims rationality. It has a mediating position between faith and reason. In Sikhism, there is an organic relationship between theology, philosophy and mysticism. All theological doctrines, are intimately related to ethics and mysticism. Whereas mystical experience and moral foundations provide the theologian with a touchstone where by he can test the adequacy of a theological doctrine, theological interpretations provide a standard whereby the individual's understanding and description of his religious experience is corrected and enlarged.

Al Ghazali calls theology *ilam-al-kalām*. In this *Al-Munquidhminad-Dalāl* he says, "The aim of theology is merely to preserve the creed of orthodoxy and to defend it against the deviations of heretics. God brought into being the class of theologians and moved them to support traditional orthodoxy

with the weapons of systematic arguments by laying bare the confused doctrines invented by heretics at variance with traditional orthodoxy. This is the origin of theology and theologians.”<sup>3</sup>

In Hinduism theology has been mainly confined to reinterpretation of ancient texts. The Bhāṣyas of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Mādhava and later commentaries on the Gitā and the Sūtras are more or less theological works. They have codified view into a pattern of orthodox school, and set forth logical defences against the sharp criticism of Buddhism and rival schools. Sikhism attempts to accept all such religious doctrine of higher religions as can be tested by reason and institutional experiences to be correct and illuminating. There is no such thing as dogmatic theology in Sikhism. The great curse of theology in many religions is their tendency to sacrifice larger interest to small, charity to creed, unity to uniformity, truth to tradition, and ethics to dogma. Every deeper and profounder interpretation of the sacred writings encounters outcry, opposition and repression. It is this attitude in some faiths which has brought them into conflict with science and other rational realms of thought. In Sikhism, there is no suppression of heresy and sedition by physical force, but heresy, if any is to be combated with Word of God and truth. Heresy cannot be washed away by earthly water or consumed by earthly fire. Freedom of worship and thought is the keynote of Sikh religious practice. The Sikh Gurus were liberal enough to let their own sons form schools of thought different from their own.

Guru Nānak’s doctrine put aside all half-truths or specious untruths of the traditionalists and fanatics of his time, whose zeal outran their discretion. He honestly and courageously brought out the reality and truth of their convictions. He reduced to shapeless ruins the vast imaginary structures which priests and pundits, *sheikhs* and *imāms* had built around simple original truths, and then tactfully established the eternal and pristine beauty of the basic tenets of these religions.

Sikh theology is fundamentally different from the theology

of other religions in that it believes that no religion and no prophet can claim finality. It frankly accepts the principle of different approaches to the same Truth. The mysteries of nature are revealed to man in his search for reality to the extent he probes it with his mind and intuition.

Guru Nānak does not believe in the authority of any ancient holy book; he believes only in the eternal truth and perennial philosophy of every great scripture. He accepts the kernel and rejects the husk.

Since few scholarly attempts have been made in one time to present the essentials of Sikh theology, this has led to a temper of indefiniteness and lack of philosophical certainty which our great theologians, Bhāi Gurdās, Bhāi Mani Singh and Bhāi Nand Lal show in their works. Bhāi Gurdās' approach to Sikh theology was rational and philosophical in his *Vārān* and mystical in his *kabir Savaiye*; Bhāi Mani Singh's approach is historical and that of Bhāi Nand Lal is idealistic and mystical in which he uses Sūfi terminology only.<sup>4</sup>

A great confusion is caused by the terminology used for theological concepts in the *Guru Granth*. Instead of coining new words for new concepts, the Sikh Gurus used old words of classical Indian philosophy for new concepts of their own. Śabda, Śūnya, Śiva and Śakti have a different meaning in Sikh theology from what they have in six systems. Tantra, and Buddhism where they originally occur. The tendency to attribute some classical Hindu interpretations to the theological terms of *Guru Granth* by explaining them out of context has given opportunity to many splinter groups in Sikhism.<sup>5</sup>

### THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF GOD

Although man cannot fully comprehend God, it does not mean that he can have no knowledge of Him at all. He can see His Light but cannot comprehend Him completely. Man can know Him partially and participate in His Being and Becoming with a knowledge which is real and true. God ever assists the seeker of

truth to know him, but the fullness of that knowledge varies from person to person. To the true Guru and the true prophet alone is His Light revealed with perfect clarity. They possess deeper insight into things divine than other people.

Through meditation upon religious truths, and a virtuous life, man achieves a closer relation with God. There is, nevertheless, always a limit to man's knowledge of God. This is due to the imperfections inherent in human nature on the one hand and to God's incomprehensibility on the other. No man and no prophet can fathom all the mysteries of God. If even natural phenomena which are but a weak manifestation of God's greatness are incomprehensible to man, how much more inscrutable must be His inmost nature.

The theological doctrine of God may best be expressed through the interpretation of His attributes mentioned in Sikh scriptures. The attributes of God may best be divided into (1) Essence Attributes and (2) Action Attributes.

### (1) *Essence Attributes*

(i) Unicity of God : Like Judaism and Islam, Sikhism insists on the unicity of God. The one Self-Existent God created the universe and governs it. A day will come when all religions will unite in the worship of one God. "There is but *one* God" says the Guru. "but Hindus and Muslims think that their God is different for the God of other religions. The *one* God whom I worship is both Allah and Rāma; to the formless one I bow in my heart. Thus I have settled the dispute between Hindus and Muslims."<sup>6</sup>

*The one God is the Father of all,  
We are all his children;  
O Guru, O Friend, I dedicate my heart to thee;  
Let me but have a glimpse of God.*

Guru Granth, p. 611

*The one Lord is the cause of all causes,  
Knowledge, wisdom, discrimination are His gifts to us;  
He is not far, He is not near, He is with us all.  
Saith Nanak : Praise the Lord with abiding love.*

Guru Granth, p. 235<sup>7</sup>

The doctrine of one God is revealed with extraordinary clarity in Sikh scriptures. Admitting freedom of worship for all, the Gurus ridiculed representations of gods through idolatry. "You trample one piece of stone under your feet, and then worship a god made of the same stone. If the idol is god, the other stone must also be god."<sup>8</sup> "Those who consider stone image to be God, their worship is wasted. Those who fall at the feet of the stone idol, their prayer and service are futile. My God ever speaks to me, and He hears my prayers. He bestows gifts on His devotees. The stone image neither speaks nor does it give anything. All worship and adoration of the idols end in nothing"<sup>9</sup> "He sits before the idol at home and worships and prays to it. He prostrates before it and begs for gifts but goes from door to door begging for his food. This is the punishment for his blind worship of a blind god. This stone god neither gives him anything for sustenance nor can it save him from the agony of death."<sup>10</sup> Thus there is a severe criticism of polytheism and idolatry as also of equating *avatārs* and prophets with God. "Burned be the tongue which says God came to earth as a human being."<sup>11</sup> "Whoever calls me God," says Guru Gobind Singh, "is doomed to hell."<sup>12</sup>

All this criticism of polytheism or henotheism stresses the unicity of God. He is one though people call Him variously. "God of the Hindus, God of the Muslims is one and the same. What can the *mulla* and *sheikh* do if they want to prove them to be different."<sup>13</sup>

Manifest or unmanifest, He is always One :

*The One is revealed*

*The One is hidden*

*The One is behind the dark veil.*

Guru Granth, p. 1215

(ii) *God's Self-Existence* : In the very opening verse of the *Guru Granth* and *Japji*, God is described as *saibham*, Self-Existent. God alone possesses self-existence, While everything else derives its being from the one Being. All things receive existence from Him. Nothing is so perfect that it could or would exist apart from and independent of Him.

Thou art O Lord,  
 Pervading Spirit of four quarters,  
 Enjoyer in four directions,  
 Self-Existent and abiding in glory,  
 Ever united with everyone.  
 Pilot at two crossings, birth and death;  
 Embodiment of grace and compassion,  
 Ever so near to everyone,  
 Deeply concerned with humanity  
 Everlasting is Thy treasure and glory.

Guru Gobind Singh, Jāp, 199

By stressing His self-existence, God placed Himself in opposition to the gods and idols, who have no existence; hence are non-entities, God's self-existence is not a mental abstraction. It is something very personal. He is the source of all life, of physical life as its Creator, and of spiritual life as its final reward. Because "He is." God remains steadfast and changeless.

(ii) *God as infinite, Eternal, and absolute* : God is termed Infinite and Eternal by some without knowing the exact significance of these terms. The Vedantic thinkers and the Upaniṣads have the tendency to take the word in the negative sense. The finite in common language is limited, so the infinite would mean limitless. In Sikhism, this is considered a qualitative infinite, the false infinite as Hegel termed it. This qualitative infinite has no religious or ethical content, and is not compatible with self-consciousness. The infinite in the quantitative aspect rests on spatial imagery and is therefore inadequate to a spiritual Being, who transcends the spatial order. It is this conception of the infinite which has given rise to dualism in Indian philosophy. Such an infinite would have no spiritual value for human soul. The qualitative and positive use of this word denotes that God is a perfect and complete Being. In this sense God is self-sufficient and subject to no limitation which do not issue from His Will (*hukam*), and He is Himself the sufficient ground of all finite existences.

In the same way, eternity which is applied to God does not



mean endless duration, the yesterday, today and for ever, but it means that God is beyond time. The Transcendental Self of God is timeless. The mundane time process is a sheer illusion, the reality of which is timelessly perfect Whole. The idea of the eternal God filling endless time is devoid of spiritual value, He is eternal because He is raised above the time process. He is eternal because He is the ultimate condition of existence of such a process, and therefore not subject to it.

The Absolute in Sikh theology means "Transcendent *nirāṅkār* in contrast to the Immanent. The universe as a system is not Absolute as is conceived by pantheists, nor is God identical with the universe. The universe is a creation of God, and it depends on Him. God is Absolute in the sense that He is the unconditioned Ground of all finite existences. He is Absolute because He is Being, harmonious and complete.

(iv) *God as Spirit and Light* : As God is being Itself (*āpāi-āp*), He is in no way subject to change or dissolution as are all material things. He is Spirit and Light. Because He is infinitely perfect, He is perfectly pure Light ( *jyoti*). God can neither be compared with anything outside Himself, nor can the human mind comprehend Him. Stressing the immateriality of God, Guru, Gobind Singh says:

*His Name is contemplated,  
In all the fourteen worlds,  
He is primal Light and eternal Being,  
Creator of all the worlds.  
Supreme is He in Beauty,  
Pure is His Form,  
He is Infinite and Perfect Being.  
Lo, He is the Essence of all religions,  
He is the Spirit that pervades all;  
He is the glory of all,  
He is the Light of all,*

Guru Gobind Singh, *jāp*, 88, 113.

In the vision of the prophets, God has always revealed Himself as eternal Light. Perfect vision is the vision of God's Light and

Beauty. Perfect perception is the perception and hearing of His unstruck music.

(v) *God's Omnipotence* : God manifested His omnipotence by calling the world into existence. His power is admired and glorified in Sikh scriptures through the wonders of His creation. Men and gods, prophets and perfect beings are all dependent on Him. "He sees divine powers like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva at work but they cannot see Him. They do not know His mystery and power" (*Japji*, 30). God is omnipotent because He has the power to invest the content of His Will with reality, and the whole realm of His existence is constantly sustained by His activity. Faith in God would be crippled in its assurance, and fail of its fullness, if the object of its trust were a Being wrestling with difficulties which He could only partially overcome. The limitations which are willed by God are not defects. Good and evil, wisdom and folly, the true and the absurd are a part of His creation governed by the laws created by Him. He is responsible for the creation of evil by the side of good, but He is not responsible for its existence in society, for man is free to choose one or the other.

*Those who seek Thy sanctuary,  
Lord, wielder of sword of Justice,  
Their tormentors die in sorrow and pain;  
Those who seek refuge at Thy feet,  
From perils and straits they are saved.*

Guru Gobind Singh, *Benti Caupāi*, 21

Guru Gobind Singh firmly believed that God could sweep evil doers by the breath of His omnipotence, but He does it in His own way and in His own time.

(vi) *Omnipresence and Immensity* : The Sikh Gurus do not believe in a God who lives only in heaven. He is wholly free from spatial limitation. He is immense and omnipresent. God is omnipresent not only by knowledge and power but also by nature. His eternal spirit pervades all beings.

*On the mountain is God,  
In the caves is God,  
On the earth is God,*

*In the sky is God,  
Here is God,  
There is God,  
In the world is God,  
In the firmament is God*

Guru Gobind Singh, *Akāl Ustat*. 52,53

The attribute of omnipresence of God also expresses the truth that the Being of God is not separable from His activity. God is everywhere in the sense that He pervades everything and He makes His working felt everywhere.

(vii) *Omniscience* : God being the Self-conscious Will and the constant Ground of the medium in which all existences and spirits act, every fact and movement within the complex whole has a reference to Him, and possesses a meaning for Him. Objects are not given to Him from without to be known, but are the expression of His will and remain dependent upon Him. Omniscience always refers to and finds support in the conception of the omnipotent. The final purpose of life and creation is clear to Him, because the whole creative process is conditioned by His Will.

*God knows the inmost thought of every soul,  
And feels the distress of good and evil men;  
From a tiny ant to the huge elephant,  
His mercy, the Lord, bestows on everyone.*

Guru Gobind Singh, *Benti Caupāi* 14

"Before He hears the loud trumpeting roar of an elephant, the cry of an ant reaches Him," says Guru Gobind Singh, "In my folly I thought Thou wert far, but no deed I do, can ever be out of Thy sight. Thou who art All-seeing, all things Thou seest."

## **2. Action Attributes of God**

(i) *Creator and Destroyer* : God is the Creator and the Destroyer of the universe. Only God has existence from Himself and therefore all things existing outside of God have in God the reason for their existence :

*Thou are the Creator;*

*All that is, is Thy handiwork  
 There in none besides Thee.  
 What Thou createst,  
 That Thou seest and knowest;  
 Through the Guru, sayeth Nanak  
 Thou art revealed in Truth.*

*Rahiras 7*

God as the Creator is also the Preserver, and source of value. God is not indifferent to values and to the suffering of the good and the virtuous at the hands of evil doers. He is moved by the love and devotion of man; He protects His saints and prophets from dangers, unless He wills that their suffering and martyrdom should serve a higher purpose.

*When His saints suffer sorrow and pain,  
 God feels their pangs of Pain;  
 When His saints feel joyous and happy,  
 God is pleased and happy,  
 The Lord feels everyone's suffering,  
 Our inmost feeling are known to Him.*

Guru Gobind Singh, *Benti Caupāi*,<sup>12</sup>

To vindicate that prophets and saints can conquer death and suffering, two Sikh Gurus and innumerable Sikhs have faced martyrdom. They did so to show to the world, their belief in the eternity of their spirit, and the fearlessness they acquired in the love of God. But in the face of some acute dangers saints have prayed for aid and intervention of God to help them in distress. God came to their help and protected them in a miraculous way. The stories of Prahalāda and the autobiographic statements of Nāmdev and Kabīr in *Guru Granth* show that God comes to the aid of the saints in distress. Such miracles and supernatural help of God are deemed a proof of God's deep concern for the values called *dharma*; and the miracles associated with it are a part of the doctrine of divine Providence and Preservation. These supernatural happenings or miracles of God should be distinguished from the miracles of human beings performed by their occult powers, which in Sikh theology are considered

dangerous and unbecoming. To protect the righteous is the *birad* (moral duty) of God. Even to redeem the repentant sinner is the moral duty of God (*patit pāvan hari birad tuhāro*). Thus God's will is sovereign. His power is sovereign. God's transcendent perfection also means that God is Self-sufficient and Sinless (*nirāñjan*).

(ii) *God's Justness* : God's justness in Sikh theology consists in rendering to each one his due according to his thoughts, words and deeds, be they good or bad. God treats both the sinner and the saint justly. God shows no partiality, does not respect a person's social status, consider only his moral condition. His omniscient eyes watch over all men to requite each according to his deeds, and in proportion to the merits of his actions.

*The final vision of Justice is not with man,  
Nor with any creature in the Universe,  
The Lord's alone is the vision of Justice;  
Thou alone art! Thou alone art!*

Guru Granth, P. 144

On man's deeds is judgements proclaimed (*karmā upar hoe tapāvas*). There is not there slightest moral effort (*ghālānā*) which God does not reward. The foundation of God's justice is in His being Truth and Omnipotent. While man is often influenced by external circumstances, God need fear no one. When God, the just Judge, acts Kindly He does so, motivated by mercy and love.

(ii) *God's love and Mercy* : The divine attribute which more than any other serves as a foundation of man's trust and faith in God is God's love for the righteous man. "If man goes one step towards Him," says Bhāi Gurdās, "the Lord comes a thousand steps towards man." God's love is not an act but a principle of all acts. God is present to His every creature not simply in virtue of the life spirit He bestows on him; He manifests Himself through the love He excites in every heart. It is because of this love, present in every being as a creative principle, that the whole world is tense with one immense aspiration quickening, and unifying, and drawing everyone towards the First Beloved. In the love of God all other loves are rooted. The ultimate condition of love is

that the lovers should be linked by a profound fraternity, and the lover of God must see his Beloved in everyone,

*On the path of love,  
Lies the glory of a thousand thrones;  
The seekers of Truth care not,  
For jewels, crowns or kingdom;  
Transient are these precious things of the world.  
Deem them no lovers,  
Who know not the mystery of love.  
God said to Moses : Thou shalt not see me :  
But Moses still climbed Mt. Senai,  
To have a glimpse of Him.  
Consider not my tearful eyes to be just eyes,  
They are cups of wine overflowing with love.  
The Beloved has merged into my soul.  
No love except the love of God lasts,  
All except those who love are transient,  
In whichever direction Thou seest,  
Thy eyes shed grace and light  
In all directions Thy holy sight  
Showers the rains of life.  
God is omnipresent.  
But where are the eyes  
That can see Him everywhere.*

Bhāi Nand Lāl Goyā, *Diwān-i-Goyā*, 27, 28, 36

Thus love of God manifests itself as grace. When God loves man more than he deserves, it is called grace. Humanly speaking, His love is immensely greater than His justness. That is why the Gurus repeatedly compare God's Love with the love of a mother embracing her child in the intensity of love, even though he provoked her to anger and had strayed away from her.

God's mercy is inexhaustible. His anger is but for a moment, but His loving kindness endures for ever. There is no end to God's love. God's love and mercy must never be regarded as a sign of weakness. Alongside his loving kindness, there always stands His justice. Human love is a call of instinct, an act of spirit, and the intoxication of the effectively. In God's love man finds his true identity. In selflessness he finds his true Self. God's love

lives in us all. We have to discover it and unveil it from under the clouds of our egoism, selfishness, and ignorance. Not to love and not to abide by His will is to refuse the fullness of one's existence. Our false self always hankers after an existence outside the radius of God's Will and God's love outside of reality and outside of life. The discovery of the seeds of God's love in our heart alone leads to spiritual rebirth. It is this love of God for man which bridges the immense distance between God and man.

### CREATION AND CREATIVE PROCESS

Before creating the universe God alone existed in His transcendent state. When He willed that He should create, there was an emanation and efflux of Primal Utterance,<sup>15</sup> called in Sikh scriptures, *kavāo* (utterance). This Will to create emanating in the form of Unstruck Music or Sound is also called *sabad*<sup>16</sup> (Word, Logos). Out of this *sabad* emerged the ground of materiality called in theological terminology *dhundhūkārā*<sup>17</sup> and generally translated as chaos. From this Unknown Darkness veiling His Being which also now was changing into Becoming emerged the existential elements fire, water, earth, ether and air.<sup>18</sup> In it pervaded the sixth Unseen principle of His Being, His all pervading Light, forming the Immanent Spirit which sustains creation. The Universe was not created in six days, but nearly thirty six yugas.<sup>19</sup>

#### (i) *Ekamkār and Omkār* :

There are two symbolic words in Sikh scriptures *ekamkār* and *omkār* which describe the cosmic Being in His transcendent form and the cosmic process. Some confusion appears to exist in regard to the interpretation of these terms. However, the Sikh Gurus and Bhāi-Gurdās leave no doubt about the distinct nature of each of these two concepts. *Ekamkār* stands for *ekam* the One Absolute, represented by numerical symbol in the *mūlmantra* but written as *ekamkār* or simply *ekam* in the hymns of the Gurus. It is the sound, symbol of the Transcendent Absolute, the supreme Being also called *nirankār*, the Formless Being,<sup>20</sup> *Omkār* or

simply *om* is the symbol of the *dhvani*, the Music, <sup>21</sup>, the primordial sound, the Logos, which becomes the creative force and the Immanent Spirit of God. Ontologically speaking, *ekamkār* is the One eternal self-existent Being, while *omkar*<sup>22</sup> is Being Becoming. In the first Existence and Essence are One, While in the second they are differentiated.

**(ii) Hukam (Will of God) :**

*Nirankār* or *ekamkār* is the Creator, Transcendent and Absolute, While *omkar* is the Ground of the creation (*Kudrat*). *Ekamkār* is the first principle of Reality called by the neo-Platonists Transcendent Mind or God. *Omkar* in their idiom is called Second Mind below the supreme Mind. It has world-ordering and world-moving function. The temporal, material, and sensible world evolved out of *omkar*, the primordial Word, the *nous* of Plotinus. Guru Nānak introduces a third principle which is not there in the philosophy of Plotinus, but is found one way or another in Islamic thinkers and the *Koran*. He calls it Divine Will (*hukam*). In Plotinus the cosmic process is conceived as necessary and impersonal, but in Sikhism, creations and dissolutions depend on Divine Will :

*When Thou, O Lord, projectest Thy Spirit,  
Living creatures take form and manifest;  
When Thou, drawest Thy Spirit unto Thyself,  
The creation blends with Thee in eternal rest.*

Guru Gobind Singh, *Benti Caupāi*

*God by His Will made the world,  
God at His Will controlleth it.  
He beholdeth all things set under His Will.*

Guru Granth, p. 1243

*By His Will all is created,  
Through His Will, all life pulsates,  
Under His Will, death has dominion  
Over all creation and all life.  
By His Will the blessed abide.  
In His Eternal Truth.  
All-pervasive is His Omnipotent Will.*

*Ibid.*, P. 55



Thus *hukam* or *amar* (both terms borrowed from Islam) mediate between the Creator and the creation and make them inseparable. This doctrine brings God in closer and more personal touch with the creation. The cosmic process is not a necessary or impersonal flow of radiation as neo-Platonism reflects, but a voluntary activity having a purpose. Space does not permit to discuss in detail the doctrine of Divine Will as it is a vast subject in itself. The Will of God is also identified with the wisdom and Word of God. It is the Divine Law which controls the destiny of the whole creation and created beings, and is responsible for their very existence. This doctrine in the ethical field is also associated with another doctrine, that of *razā*, acceptance of the Will of God. This term is also borrowed from Islamic literature. *Razā* is a state of mind which understands clearly the Divine Will, without which it is not possible to know and understand the divine dispensation of God. The *razā* of God amounts to His spiritual gifts bestowed on man, and an enlightened man lives according to inner dictates of this *hukam razā*.<sup>23</sup> The *razā* of human beings with God is dedicated submission and infinite patience to do His Will. Even the most unfavourable circumstances of life are regarded by it as divine manifestation of His majesty (*Jalāl*) and splendour (*jamāl*). In Sikhism, there is the same emphasis on *razā*, also called *bhāna*, as there is no renunciation in ascetic cults and creeds.

Thus Divine Will is the heart of Nature, and he who can commune with the heart of Nature, understands His Will, His Law. It is the same as the doctrine of the Immanent Law or, as Whitehead would call it, the doctrine of Imposed Law. This doctrine leads to the monotheistic conception of God as essentially transcendent and only accidentally immanent. *Besides Himself, God created Nature (dai kudrat Sājīā)*. Nature is sustained by His Spirit which Bhāi Gurdās calls the sixth pervasive element, which is invisible.<sup>24</sup>

To sum up, the Oneness of God is not a speculative idea inferred from the idea of His perfection, but the ineffable

Oneness of God is self-evident from His presence revealed in experience. He is one in His unmanifest transcendent state; He is one in His manifest and immanent condition.

*Maifest in all things,  
He is also Unmanifest Ground of all things,  
He is Formless, He is Transcendent.  
Out of Himself, Nānak He made all things;  
Into Himself all things are again absorbed.*

*Sukhmani, sl. 1*

*As an actor in a play appears in many guises,  
So God When His play is ended abandons the guise,  
And appears as the One only.*

*Guru Granth, p. 736*

God is not presented only through the negative theology of what He is not; but also through the positive theology of what He is. He is Light, Music, Beauty, Truth, Wisdom. The one God does not only mean numerically one, but unique, without a second like Him. He is Being who is both beyond and here, both in nature and history. His power is His love. His justice is His mercy. Guru Nānak says :

*If there were any one beside Thee,  
Thy equal and rival, O God,  
I could turn to him;  
I turn to Thee, and pray before Thee.*

*Guru Granth, p. 1242*

### **(iii) The Doctrine of Śiva and Śakti :**

The concepts of *bhakti* and *śakti* have again not been clearly understood. By *bhakti* some mean the *navadhā bhakti* of Hinduism, which it is not and by *śakti* they mean the power symbolized by the sword, which is absolutely incorrect. Obviously misconceived interpretations are based on the gross distortions of theological concepts of Śiva and Śakti. Nowhere in the Sikh scriptures is Śakti ever associated with *bhakti* as it is in Hinduism, but with the concept of Śiva. No school of Sikhism has adopted Śāktism except perhaps Rāmraj's successors.

The terms Śiva and Śakti are used in the Sikh scriptures in the same sense as they are used in higher school of Śaivism

(Kashmir Śaivism and Śoutherns Śaivism). Śiva and Śakti form the keynote of the doctrine and philosophy of Yoga and Śaivism and they mean *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, Spirit and Nature, Wisdom and Cosmic Energy, manifest as material power.

While in Hinduism, the worship of Śiva and Śakti has been carried to the highest in the form of worship of Śiva as God and Śakti as Divine Mother, on one side, and on the other, to the most degrading concepts and practices of the Śāktas, the Vāmācārīs; in Sikhism, they have a distinct and well-defined meaning. Their physiological and metaphysical ideas coming from Sāṃkhya and Yoga are accepted as facts, but not as religious or mystic ideals, as is done in many schools of Hinduism. In the idealistic school of Hinduism Śakti and Śiva are accepted as divine couple, playing divine drama in the *bhakti* or devotion of various schools. In these bhakti schools, Śakti and Śiva have become Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Śiva is the universal male and Śakti is the universal female. In Hindu Tantras Śiva and Śakti are two aspects of one Reality (*tattva*). To attain union with this Reality through Tantrika and esoteric means is the goal of Tāntrika Śāktism. The Tāntrika path is subtle and highly technical. It can be practised by an initiated only under the guidance of a competent *guru*. In the course of time, the esoteric method did not remain confined to the circle of initiates. It has been alleged that the use of five *makāras* or *pañca-tattvas* recommended in the Tentras, such as the *Kulārṇavatantra* and the *Guhyasamājatantra* etc., was misunderstood and misused by some Śāktas. As a consequence of this abuse the Śāktas in general, and Śiva-Śakta *yogins* in particular, become the target of ridicule and fierce criticism during medieval centuries.

The Sikh Gurus severely criticise these practices of the Śāktas and condemn them as atheists, materialists and hypocrites who misuse religion for gratifying their desires. The word *sākata* is almost a word of abuse in Sikh literature. A religious person is advised to keep away from them.

When the word Śiva is used without reference to Śakti in Sikhism, it is used symbolically for God, the all-pervading Light.<sup>25</sup>

When Śiva and Śakti are used together they have metaphysical connotation, and they mean Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Spirit and Cosmic energy.<sup>26</sup> Behind both Śiva and Śakti, the operating principle of creation, the will and power of God work.

These principles work in the universe (macrocosm) and the human body (microcosm).<sup>27</sup>

Śiva symbolizes Divine intelligence, wisdom, pure consciousness, While Śakti is the cosmic energy manifest as sensuous power, which at the level of sublimation on the metaphysical plane is Cosmic Energy (*mahā-māya*) or the *ekā māi of Japji* (*paṇḍī 30*), but on the human plane becomes higher aspiration for mental and occult powers. On the pure physical and mental plane Śakti, is delusion, darkness, ignorance. Guru Arjan says : "Śiva, the Light has illumined my inner being and Śakti the darkness, is dispelled."<sup>28</sup> "God has created two obstinate powers within man, Śiva (Wisdom and Spirit) and Śakti (darkness and delusion). Such is the Will of God that Śakti is ultimately defeated and conquered by Śiva"<sup>29</sup> "Śiva has eliminated Śakti and darkness is dispelled."<sup>30</sup> He Himself created Śiva - Śakti and operated it through His Will.<sup>31</sup>

Both Śiva and Śakti (Spirit and Matter) according to Sikhism operated within the three modes of existence: *sattava*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. In the material creation the stars and planets, the sun and the moon are sustained and created out of these powers.<sup>32</sup> The realization of the Self, the true spirit in us leads to enlightenment within the three modes. The inner powers of *yoga* and *bhoga*(satiation) are released through it.<sup>33</sup>

The one fundamental difference between Hinduism and Sikhism in relation to this concept is that most of the religious ideals and doctrines of Hinduism ranging from Nature worship of the Vedas, to worship of *trimūrti* revolve around the highest concepts of Śiva and Śakti. All the Bhakti cults of Hinduism also revolve around them and symbolize Śiva and Śakti by substituting them for the mystic personality of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Sītā and Rāmā. But in Sikhism they are instruments of realization of

Transcendent Truth. The Hindu adore Śiva and Śakti as God and Goddess, and seek in them the fulfilment of various types of religious emotions and worship. Sikhism rejects them as such, but takes their metaphysical existence into consideration, only to first eliminate Śakti with Śiva (Spirit), and then go beyond that. All the faiths, doctrines, and creeds that are confined to the limitations of Śiva Śakti remain within the limits of the three modes of existence. Perfect illumination of the Transcendent Truth is beyond them.<sup>34</sup> A Sikh goes beyond these to attain the *sahaja-samādhi* of perfect communion with the Divine.<sup>35</sup> "Hinduism and a good many cults in the Semitic religious concentrate on acquiring these powers to trade in miracles and satiation of the Self, but Sikhism emphasizes trading in Truth and Truth alone; Truth which is transcendent and can be attained only through perfect Love."<sup>36</sup> This is a clear demarcation which Bhāi Gurdās brings out between Hinduism and Sikhism in its theological and mystic approach to God, on the basis of this doctrine.

**(iv) Human Being :**

Man is the epitome of God's creation. There is a mysterious universe around man and there is a mysterious universe within man. This is the mystery of creation and life which religion, philosophy, science and literature attempt to solve, and each attempts it in its own way. Out of all the living creatures man alone questions the why of his existence. God has entered into partnership with man alone in the drama of His Creation. "Man alone can use his eyes, ears, hands, and mind to toil for higher truths of life and to live like a god, on earth full of other living creatures. He alone rises above himself to realise truth."<sup>37</sup> Man is the crown of creation.

**(a) Human Body :** Born of the primal existential elements, the body returns to earth which is Hebrew is called *ādamah* and from which we have the Punjabi word *ādmi* (man). While Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism lament the misery of the body, which St. Francis calls brother *dōnkey*, the Sikh Gurus sing the

nobility of the body. The Jain monk in particular feels ashamed that his soul has been housed in this repulsive physical structure of flesh, blood and bones, of *nine apertures*, each of which ceaselessly secretes filthy substances. But for the Sikh Gurus the body is a temple of God :

*The body is the temple of God,  
In it are revealed precious pearls of knowledge.*

Guru Granth, p. 1346

*In the body, God is present,  
The body is His temple,  
In the body is the place of pilgrimage,  
Of which I am a pilgrim.*

Guru Granth, p. 659

No doubt the Sikh Gurus discourage the self-infatuated and narcissistic attachment to the body, but they do not look on it as a house of impurities, in which everything is disgusting and offensive. The body is a sacred temple of God. Man in his temporal existence does not exist apart from God. He is within God, and God is within Him. God is not hiding in the temple of bricks and mortar, He is in the temple of the body. The temples of brick and mortar become houses of God, when they enshrine the holy word in them, when they become places for the communion with Truth, and when they inspire spirituality, wisdom, and love of God.

*O my body, God infused His Light in thee,  
And you were born in the world;  
In thee the Lord kindled His Light,  
Then you came to the world.*

Guru Amardās, Anand.

*I searched and searched the body within,  
The Guru revealed Life's mystery therein.*

Guru Granth, p. 695

Sikhism does not encourage, man to look on the flesh with cynical contempt but to control and counsel it. Unnatural frustration of the flesh should not be allowed to molest the spirit. Wanton defacement of this temple of God, the body, is considered vandalism. Man should eat, drink and live a cheerfully

enlightened and decent life.

(b) *The Self* (Sanskrit, *ātman*; Pali : *attā*; Apabhraṃsa and Punjabi, *appā*; Hebrew, *rūah*; Punjabi, *ruh*). In the self of man lies the riddle of the true nature of man's being and the ultimate meaning of his life. The separation of mind, body, and the real self (*appā* or *khudi*) as it is called is the main cause of the prevailing mental darkness and spiritual ignorance. Man discovers step by step the unity of himself, Nature and God. When man denies his real Self, he denies God within and without. When he searches his inner being and realizes his true Self, he comes face to face with Eternity, the universal spirit of God within him and then begins the spiritual unfolding of the immanent light of God within him. He realizes that the same universal Spirit and Light pervades the universe outside him as the deeper and profounder universe within him.

*Everything is within oneself, nothing is outside oneself,  
He who seeketh the Lord outside himself, is lost in doubt.*

Guru Granth, p. 102

In Sikh scriptures many theological terms are used in a special sense though later-day interpreters seem to miss their import frequently. We have for instance such terms :

- |                       |   |  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <i>ghar me ghar</i>   | : | (lit.) the house within the house; the soul within Oversoul.   |
| <i>mahal me mahal</i> | : | (lit.) palace within the palace; the abode of the Guru in the abode of God).                           |
| <i>man me man</i>     | : | (lit : mind within the mind; the human mind within the illumined Divine Mind)                          |
| <i>cit me cit</i>     | : | (lit : the heart within the heart; consciousness within Super-consciousness)                           |
| <i>āpa madhe āp</i>   | : | (lit : oneself within oneself; the self within the divine Self, or the Soul within the Indwelling God) |

The same word self is used for the ego-conscious personality of man, and the same self is used for the illumined being of the

inner personality of man. The ego-centric self (*khudi* or *hau*) is not to be suppressed but sublimated. Its covering of self delusion is to be removed by the intuitional awakening through the Guru's word. The soul, *ātman*, our real Self, cannot cease to be. It is this imperishable self that has first to be consciously perceived and realized. But in Sikhism the realization of Self does not mean the realization of God. It is the beginning of the inner pilgrimage of the eternal shrine of God.

*God meeteth him,  
who realizeth his self,  
By the light shedding love of the Guru.*

*Guru Granth, p. 364*

*On knowing the self,  
Man meets God,  
And then he dies not.*

*Ibid., p., 1410*

*Who is a man of Wisdom?  
Says Nanak : He who realizes his own self  
And understandeth God.*

*Ibid., p. 25*

The ego-centric self in man is the temporal self working within the limitations of intellect and the sense. The real self, the *ātman*, the Mind with in the mind, is the spiritual self of man in which blazes the hidden Light of God, which is intuitionally revealed by the Guru, the divine enlightener.

#### GURU, PERFECT PROPHET AND SAVIOUR

The word *guru* is so popular in India, and used so often in the Hindu world, that in order to understand the theological concept of the Guru in Sikhism, one must completely drive out of one's mind the popular Hindu notions of a *guru*. The popular term *guru* used for a Brāhmana, a Saṁnyāsin, a yogic teacher and even a school teacher, has made guruship so cheap in India that a scholar has aptly described these *gurus* as "wicks which smell foul after the lamps have been extinguished."

The Guru in Sikhism is a perfect prophet or messenger of



God, in whom the Light of God shines fully, visibly, and completely. He is not God. But he is as perfect and sinless as God. "The mysteries of God and his creation are known either to God or to the Guru."<sup>38</sup> To distinguish the Guru in Sikhism from the false *gurus* or false prophets, he is generally termed *satguru*, the true Guru is the true instrument of His Will and is commissioned by God to reveal His Truth to humanity. God revealed Himself in the most extraordinary manner through the Gurus. God revealed Himself clearly and perfectly to the true Guru, and the Guru revealed Him to humanity. The spirit of God shines resplendently in being and in word of the Guru. The Guru is the light that shines in darkness and his is the true light that enlightens every man. The word *guru*, etymologically means : *gu* : darkness, *ru* : light or revelation : *Guru* : is dispeller of darkness, revealer of Light.

*In the true Guru He has installed His own Spirit,  
Through him, God reveals Himself.*

Guru Nānak Āsā di Vār. 6

*The true Guru reveals the Truth,  
It is a wealth which is priceless.*

Guru Granth, P. 1092

The seed of divine Light is there in every heart and every soul. It remains hidden to our intellect and earthly eyes, but God reveals it to man through the inspiration and magnetic touch of the Guru.

*The one eternal Light resideth in the body,  
The perfect and true Guru reveals it through the Word.*

Guru Granth, P. 125

*The key to mystery of inner life,  
Is in the hands of the Guru,  
No one else can open the portals of inner treasures.*

*Ibid.*, p. 124

On account of his divine prerogatives and attributes, the Guru though human in form, is godly in spirit. God speaks to humanity through him. God enlightens the seekers of truth through him and his Word. The historical Guru Nānak is presented somewhat

crudely in our Janamsākhis and the biographies based on them, but the mystic personality of Nānak, in all its manifestations, is treated in very great detail by Bhāi Gurdās, Bhāi Mani Singh, and Bhāi Nand Lal. It is this mystic personality we are concerned with in theology. No historical phenomenal of the lives of the Sikh Gurus can be explained correctly unless it is done in relation to the mystic personality of the true Guru. Explaining his mystic personality Guru Gobind Singh said to his poet-laureate, Bhāi Nand Lal. "Listen O Nand Lal, I, the Guru, have three personalities :

(1) Attributeless (*nirgun*), the Light which is eternally with God, and represents God's Being in pure form. It is because of this consummate perfection that God is in the Guru, and the Guru is in God."

(2) Manifest (*sargun*), the Guru manifested himself in the form of the historical Guru, and he is now eternally here in the form of *sādh sangat* i.e., congregation of the enlightened saints (the Khālsā). "One initiate is a disciple of the Guru, a Sikh, two or more make *sadh sangat*, in five, God's Light shines as perfectly as it does in the Guru." It is on this principle enunciated during the life time of Bhāi Gurdās that a hundred years later the holy order of the Khālsā, in which the perfectly enlightened five Sikhs represent the humanly living Guru, was ordained by Guru Gobind Singh.

(3) The word (*sabad*) is the Guru, and in the Guru, the divine Light is *sabad*.

*Those who encounter the Guru,  
Achieve an indestructible love of God,  
The Guru bestows divine knowledge,  
And unveils the mysteries of the three worlds.*

.....

*Without the Guru's help we cannot burn,  
To nothingness the ashes of self-love;  
For the Guru kindless in the human hearts,  
The fire of the love of God.  
Through the Guru's word alone,*

There comes the moment of knowing,  
 My Self is that self  
 Through faith in the Guru.  
 The true Self is known :  
 What else do we need to know?

Guru Granth, p. 59

### DOCTRINE OF WORD (SABAD) AND NAME (NAM)

The doctrine of the *sabad* is the single basic thought, the governing idea, and the essential doctrine which gives life to the great structure called Sikhism. At times naive and childish meanings have been given to this profound concept of Sikhism, which has different significance in metaphysics, mysticism and practical religion. The word that come closest to its meaning are the Greek *logos*, and the Neoplatonists's *nous*.

*Sabad* in Sanskrit and Punjabi, *Vāk* and *vāṇi* in Sanskrit and Punjabi, *logos* in Greek, *verbum* in Latin, *memra* in Hebrew, *ākhar* and *kevāo* in Punjabi, revolve around the same doctrinal ideas.

#### (i) *Sabad as All pervading Light :*

We have discussed this earlier in the theology of *omkār*, the Word Primordial. On the metaphysical plane *sabad* is the pervading and illuminating principle of the transcendent God, the only active principle of creation. It is the regulating Life-Force of the universe behind creation and dissolution. "In the three worlds, the lamp of the word (*sabad*) is the illuminating light."<sup>39</sup> It is the *sabad* which directs the cosmic process towards its destiny directed by His will. It is the germinative principle of the Divine Light manifest but hidden behind the visible universe. *Sabad* is also the ground of our inner life, the inner treasures of wisdom. It is the doctrine of *hukam* (Will) and *sabad*, which completely eliminate the metaphysical separation and distinction between the Transcendent and Immanent, the Being and the Becoming. Thus Guru Nānak's conception of *Sabad* is more dynamic than that of the Greeks. That is why *sabad* has been called in Sikh theology the essence of knowledge (*sabad-braham*).

*giān*). *Sabad*, the basic doctrine of Sikh theology, is the intermediary between God and creation, between Guru and disciple. *Sabad* is therefore called the nectar of life (*amṛta*).

**(ii) *Sabad as the Mystic Personality of the True Guru:***

When Guru Nānak was asked by the Yogis in regard to his Guru, he replied: "The word (*sabad*) is my Guru," God had anointed him with His word, His wisdom (*Logos*), and illumined his being so perfectly that the Guru's inner-personality was now the Word personified.

*With the beginning of the breath of life,  
My system began also;  
Its source is the Wisdom of the true Guru.  
The true Guru is the Word (sabad)  
And human consciousness is the disciple.  
What keepeth me in my detachment,  
Is meditating on the Ungraspable One.  
Through the One Divine Word.*

Guru Nānak, *Sidh Gost* 44

Even during their life time, the Sikh Gurus insisted that their human body was not the Guru, but the Light of the Word within their heart was their real personality. Whoever sought salvation from them had to approach them mentally and spiritually with an open and receptive heart to receive His Light. Mere outward glimpse of the Guru, or outward profession of faith in him does not bring the disciple close to the Guru. "The Word (*sabad*) is the Image and the Person of the Guru" says Bhāi Gurdās.<sup>40</sup> The Gospel of the Master (*vāṇi*) is the Guru, the being of the Guru is the Gospel."<sup>42</sup> The word is said to be attributeless (*nirgun*) personality of the Guru.

**(iii) *The Word as the True Name (nām) :***

The importance of the word as Name can be judged from the fact that the word *nām* (Divine Name) occurs in the *Ādi Granth* 5999 times. The Word as the Name is the mystic Word used in practical religious life and discipline of meditation. There are two types of names; there are the attributive names of God (*Kirtam nām*) which described one or other quality or power of

God. Then we have the True Name (*sat nām*) which emanates from a prophet's personal experience and vision of the Divine Being. Such a Name is the word *Vāhguru* "Wonderful art Thou, Enlightener of Soul", which forms the mystic Word in the Sikh religious discipline. The True Name in the deeper sense is not the word by which we describe an object, but the total power, quality, character or Reality in which the prophet has tried to sum up mystic power and experience of His presence. It is a knowable Name, *numen* : the Mystic Word, the *satinām* : the True Name of God is the embodiment of His power, His Light, His Wisdom and is capable of being registered by the consciousness and made conceivable. The prophets have given us Divine Names of the nameless God, which reflect His presence in our consciousness. That is why contemplating or meditating on the true Name is called practising the presence of God. In the *Guru Granth*, the true Name has been mentioned as *vaḍā nām*. Great Name; *uḥā nām*; Highest Name; *ek nām*; The One Name; *Gurmat nām* the Name of the Guru's Wisdom; *amrit nām*; Ambrosial Name; *Gurmukh nām*; Name of the Enlightened; *nirbhau nām* Fearless Name; *nirmal nām* Pure Name; *abināsi mantra*; Eternal Mystic Word; *nirgun nām*; Attributeless Name : *niranjan nām*; Immaculate Name; *nehcal nām*; Unshakable Name. The true Name is the Mystic Word in which resides the Light and Spirit of God:

*In the Name, the Lord's Spirit abides,  
May the Name in me be indwelling.  
Without The Guru we walk in darkness,  
Without the Word we understand not life,  
The Word or the Guru is Light,  
His Word's Light leads to Truth.*

*Guru Granth, Nānak 1, Sri Rāg, 55  
From the Word has emanated the Name,  
Through the Word is union attained,*

*Ibid., p. 644*

Thus when the Word manifests itself in the being of the Guru, as his inner personality, his gospel, his mystic word, the Name

becomes symbol and substance of God's wisdom and light.

(iv) *The Word and man's stream of consciousness.*

(*sabadsurati*) :

Just as the Guru's eternal personality is the Word, so man's inner being is his *surati* (consciousness). It is only when this relation of *word and mind* is established that the disciple is reborn in the Spirit of the Guru. The disciple dies in the Word, and he never faces death after this spiritual rebirth : "By self-effacement the disciple dies, and is reborn in the Word."<sup>43</sup> He who dies in the Word, never dies again."<sup>44</sup> The true meeting of the Guru and the disciple is in the meeting of the Word and Mind.

*Everyone sees the Guru outwardly,  
But a mere sight of the Guru brings not salvation.  
Without understanding the Guru's word,  
The self is not made clean,  
Nor the love of Name implanted.*

Guru Granth, p. 594

A disciple has first got to get initiated into the spiritual mystery of the Word. This is done by a Sikh at the time of the baptism ceremony. The baptism ceremony has two parts; one is called bleaching or *pahul*, and the other to dye the soul in the colour of Divine Name, or to impart the mystic Word. After this initiation contemplation and meditations become as natural as breathing. "The Word is simply repeated all whole, and not broken up and undone by discursive analysis; the fact for which the Word stands will end by presenting itself to the soul in the form of an integral intuition. When this happens then to use the language of the Sufis the doors of the letters of this word are opened, and the soul passes into Reality."<sup>45</sup> The repetition should not be mechanical, but it should be inspired and the consciousness (*surati*) should with all zeal and devotion dive deeper and deeper in to the light and music of the word. This is what Bhāi Gurdās calls it (*sabad surat agāhan*). The veil of darkness is lifted and the doors of superconsciousness are opened : (*sri gur sabad sun srvan kapāt khule*). "When the mind dives deeper and deeper into the Word, all mental impurities depart, the Wisdom of the Guru dawns on

the soul, man attains equipoise, the divine Light blazes in his soul, and fearlessness is attained in profound contemplation of the Divine.<sup>46</sup> The Unseen, the Unfathomable is grasped through the Guru's Word."<sup>47</sup>

**(v) *Sabad as Unstruck Music (anhad sabad) :***

In the highest spiritual state of Nirvāṇa or Sūnya one sees Divine light in full effulgence and hears Celestial Music which is called *anhad-Sabad*. This is the highest and the most realistic manifestation of the Word. This is the goal, the inner core, the divine Presence seen as Music and Light. A detailed discussion on it would lead us into the field of Sikh mysticism which is beyond the scope of this paper.

**KARMA AND FREE WILL**

The fact that man suffers for his bad deeds, or is rewarded for his good deeds inevitably leads to the theory of *karma*. In Sikhism, the law of *karma* according to which we reap what we sow is not inexorable. The burden of our sins, the taint of *karma*, the weight of all the past can be thrown off, by diving deeper into truth, by the grace of God, and by leading a purer and nobler life. This life, the human life, is an opportunity for this freedom to rise or to fall into the pit. There is no determinism in our fate, if we rise above the level of Nature. At the level of Nature or animal existence, we no doubt reap what we sow, but at the spiritual level of existence which can be reached by moral and spiritual efforts and illumination, man attains his freedom. It is freedom not only from the wheel of *karma* but also from birth and death. Those who lead a purely temporal life at the level of the sense, "their deeds follow them and they reap what they sow"<sup>48</sup> "But the Guru's word erase the blot of thousands of evil deeds of the past, and the greatest sinner can become the greatest saint."<sup>49</sup>

"Countless sins of the past life are washed away by the illumination of the Word."<sup>50</sup> It is not a mere coincidence that Guru Nānak and the subsequent Sikh Gurus had the closest doctrinal relations with the Qadariya and Chisti schools of Sufis which believed in free will in opposition to the Jabariya Sufi

school of thought which according to orthodox Islam, is based on complete dependence on Divine Will. The idea of determinism and fatalism is repugnant to the Sikh mind as it does not reconcile with the idea of reward and punishment, nor with the doctrine of Grace and Compassion.

#### RE-INCARNATION AND TRANSMIGRATION

With the theory of *Karma* is associated the theory of rebirth. It is based on the conception that there is an intrinsic spiritual value in the soul of man which guarantees its everlasting existence. Every creature is an organic part of the creation as a whole. The conservation of spiritual values is also based on this idea.

In Sikhism there are two distinct doctrines which fall under the category of rebirth. When a soul passes from one human life to another, in its moral and spiritual progress, it goes on acquiring human births till it acquires Nirvāṇa. Such a rebirth is a blessing and gift of God. It means God out of His mercy and compassion has given us one more opportunity to fulfil our ultimate destiny and the seeker of Truth cries out, when He is at His door : "For many lives I have been separated from Thee, O Beloved. This life is dedicated to Thee, and Thy love."<sup>51</sup> Human life is an opportunity to rise to God and heaven or fall into the hell of birth and deaths. We exercise our free will within the limits of birth and death in our pilgrimage to Truth. That is why human life is called a very precious life (*durlabhi-Mānus-Janam*). This reincarnation is in the ascending order till man completely eliminates rebirth. Through the Guru's word is rebirth eliminated<sup>52</sup> It is "God who created lower lives and the cycle of birth and deaths."<sup>53</sup> It is path of thorns leading to the valley of flowers. The Buddha is said to have passed through many births stories about which are preserved in the Jātakas and Avadānas. Guru Gobind Singh speaks of his past birth "as a great Yogi meditating in the Himalayas till His Spirit attained perfect union with God, and was sent as the torch-bearer of Truth and Dharma."<sup>54</sup>

Every man can cut asunder the bonds of birth and death



during human life, and attain perfection. This hope is extended by the Sikh Gurus to the lowliest of the low, to every human being living on the planet, no matter what his status, colour of the skin or nationality and race.

*The chains are cut asunder,*

*Rebirth has ended,*

*The mind is conquered and victory achieved.*

Guru Granth, Guru Arjan : Bāvan Akhari, 38

Rebirth in the descending order is a punishment and a curse. The soul passes through animal lives suffering untold agonies. As a beast of burden he carries the load of his sins without any opportunity to get out of his present predicament. This is transmigration, *āvāgavan*. The wicked become victims of the wheel of sorrow.<sup>55</sup>

### HEAVEN AND HELL

Heaven and hell are states of mind and not geographical localities in time and space. They are symbolically represented by joy and sorrow, bliss and agony, light and fire. There is no such thing in Sikhism as eternal damnation or an everlasting pit of fire created by a revengeful God. Hell is the corrective experience through lower lives in which the hardened core of the ego of wicked people suffers in continuous cycle of births and deaths in lower lives. The problem of hell is ontological, and is not only connected with justice and retribution, but also with freedom and personality. God gives man the moral right to prefer hell to heaven, and to prefer divine love to both hell and heaven. Hell is pictured symbolically as an intense and agonising experience which proves ultimately the indestructible nature of personality. Sikh theology and mysticism rise to the heights of disinterestedness and are free from the fear of hell or a craze for joys of paradise.

### SORROW AND HAPPINESS

Suffering is so universal, and so manifold, that the human

mind is tempted to change its whole outlook when it faces sorrow and suffering. Guru Nānak differentiates the following types of sorrows : (1) Sorrow of separation from the beloved ones (2) Sorrow of hungry stomach (3) Sorrow of tyranny and death (4) Sorrow of bodily ailments (5) Sorrow of mental and spiritual disease,<sup>56</sup> All these sorrows have made suffering universal. Says Sheikh Farid :

*I thought sorrow has engulfed me only,  
But the whole world is engulfed in grief,  
On looking at the world from the higher plane,  
I found every home ablaze with sorrow's flames.*

Guru Nānak says : "The whole world is groaning in sorrow."<sup>57</sup> But there is a type of happiness emanating from the transient joys of the sense which leads to greater sorrow and agony than any other physical suffering. The sage tries to seek happiness through the travail of sorrow, by confronting it, overcoming it, and taking the mind beyond ordinary grief and happiness. There is a suffering that chastises us, and results in spiritual purification.

The spirit of man is greater than all human sufferings, Man faces evil and pain with the spirit of martyrdom and does not surrender the freedom of his mind and spirit to any conceivable tyranny. The more intimate one is with God, the more willingly he subjects himself to His Will, "Lord when I am happy, I shall worship Thee only. When I suffer I shall forget Thee not; For Thee I would tear this sentient frame to pieces, and let it be devoured in flames. For Thee I would live as humblest man."<sup>58</sup>

Such a man is a sage about whom Guru Tegh Bahādur Says:

*That man is enlightened sage,  
Who in happiness and suffering,  
Remains poised with equanimity;  
Who in glory and shame,  
Feels just the same.  
As well from sorrow and pain;  
Who cares not for praise,  
Nor even for blame,  
But seeks the state of Nirvāṇa.*

In such a state of spiritual exaltation the Sikh not only conquers sorrow and suffering, but develops an optimistic will to live and conquer all sorrow and ignorance. A Sikh gives up brooding over nightmarish terrors of dissolution and tramples the demon of death under his feet.

#### THE LAST JUDGEMENT

The concept of a just and Omnipotent God demands an eschatology which promises that those who fail to get justice in the human and corrupt world will get it after death in His court. The justice of God would be vindicated after death, since too often, it was not demonstrated in life. The grandiose conception of the Last Judgement in Islam and Christianity is taken from Talmudic scriptures, but the Sikh Gurus did not believe that the dead humanity will remain in the grave till the end of the world. Judgement will be pronounced on everyone's deeds, say the Sikh Gurus, immediately after death. Post-mortem judgement means God's ultimate assertion of his sovereignty over his creatures. "So long as man is in love with illusory things" says Guru Arjan in his *Sukhmani* "so long shall Dharamarāj, the Justiciar King, continue to punish him." (Ast. 12:4) "The king of death, Dharamrāj, shall chastise him, who has not cast down his self-will."<sup>59</sup> "But the king of death is the friend and servant of those who have attained enlightenment through the Word."<sup>60</sup> "Those who have been liberated through His grace escape the punishment of their sins, the king of death tears the scrolls of their evil deeds."<sup>61</sup> "When the mind is illumined, and treasure of spiritual life acquired, what will poor Dharamarāj do?"<sup>62</sup> Thus human beings can conquer death, erase their past sins, and become greater than even the king of death, through perfect union with God.

Thus summing up of the fundamental doctrines of Sikh theology gives us only a glimpse of this vast and profound subject, the originality, the depth, and the universality of which have not been fully explored. In fact, Sikhism has yet to produce its Al Ghazali and Thomas Aquinas who can revive the great tradition

of eminent apostles, Bhāi Gurdās and Bhāi Mani Singh, and rebuild the mansions of the Sikh Church.

### NOTES & REFERENCES

1. *Guru Granth*, p. 1243, and p. 815.
2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 22, p. 61.

Here are some other illuminating definitions :

(i) Theology is the science which by right use of reason in accordance with proper scientific methods correlates, systemizes and organizes the matter of human religious experience in such a way as to reach a unified body of coherent doctrines, fitted to satisfy the mind's demand for truth and to furnish guidance for the practical life.

*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 12, p. 293.

(ii) Simply stated, theology is a study of the question of God and relation of God to the world of reality. Theology in the widest sense of the term is a branch of philosophy that is special field of philosophical inquiry having to do with God. However, the term is widely employed to mean the theoretical expression of practical religion. Theology need not have a necessary reference to religion: it may be purely theoretical discussion about God's relation to the world on a disinterested plane of free inquiry.

Degobert D. Runes, *Dictionary of Philosophy*

3. Quoted by W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali*, p. 28
4. Although there is no single book on systematic theology, considerable work has been done on various aspects of Sikh theology by Pandit Tara Singh Nirotam, Bhai Vir Singh, Bhāi Sher Singh (Kashmir) and Bhāi Randhir Singh. The approach of Pandit Tara Singh Nirotam is neo-Vedantic, that of Bhāi Vir Singh historical, of Bhai Sher Singh theosophic and of Bhai Randhir Singh doctrinal, based on scriptural sources. Many books on Gurmat have been written by others with extremely superficial and crudely grasped and digested knowledge of the concepts which have done more harm than good by their confused shallow thinking. Our *ṭikās* (interpretations of the *Guru Granth*) published upto now are extremely disappointing so far as elucidation of theological and philosophical doctrine is

- concerned. These *ṭikās* merely give running explanation, and they conveniently skip over all doctrines such as *nām*, *sabad*, *anahad*, *sunna* etc. They make the reading easy but not a single concept is explained in all the thick volumes of interpretations.
5. *Nāmdhāris*, *Rādhāsoāmis*, *Nirankārīs*, present-day *Sevāpanthis* and *Udāsīs*. A century back the last two formed the best missionary wings of the Sikh Panth.
  6. *Guru Granth*, p. 1136.
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 1080, 1177.
  8. *Ibid.*, p. 525.
  9. *Ibid.*, p. 1160.
  10. *Ibid.*, *Nānak I*, *Vār Sāraṅg*.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 1136.
  12. *Guru Gobind Singh*, *Bacitra Nāṭak*, chap. 6.
  13. *Guru Granth*, p. 1158.
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
  15. *Eko kavāo hoe pasao* : Out of one Primordial utterance (Logos) the whole creation emanated (*Guru Nānak*, *Japji*). *Ek kavāvai te sabhi hoā* : out of one creative elan (Logos) the whole creation emanated. *Guru Granth*, p. 1003.
  16. *Utpai paralau sabde hovai, sabde hī fir upati hovai* : Creation and dissolution take place through the Word (Logos).
  17. *Arabada narabad dhundhūkārā* : Through unaccountable ages brooded over utter vacancy. *Ibid*, p. 1035.
  18. *Bhāi Gurdās*, *Vār I*.
  19. *Ādi Granth*, pp. 1061, 555, 2982.
  20. *Nirankār akār kari ekam-kār apār sadāia, ekaṁkārahu sabad dhuni* : *Om̐kār akār banāya*.  
The Formless Being became One Self-Existent God and is called *ekaṁkār*, out of which creation proceeded.  
*Bhāi Gurdās* : *Vār 26:2*, See also *Vār 39:2*  
The one *ekaṁkār* stand apart as the Supreme Transcendent. *Guru Granth*. p. 838, *parnvo ādi ekaṁkāra* : Salvation to the Primal-Transcendent Being.  
*Guru Gobind Singh* : *Akāl Ustat*, I.
  21. *ekaṁkār ikatūg likhi uḍā om̐kār likhāiā* : *ekaṁkār* is written and symbolised by the Guru the numerical One while *ekaṁkār* is symbolized by the letter *uḍā* (first letter of Punjabi alphabet)

Bhāi Gurdās, Vār 39:1, this clearly differentiates the two concepts of *ekamkār* and *omkār*.

22. *Omkāri brahmā upati; omkāri saila juga phae; omkāri beda nirmai*  
From *omkār* : The creative Word of Brahmā, Time and Space and Vedas emerged, Guru Nānak, *Omkāri*, 1, *Guru Granth*, 999, *omkār ek dhuni ekai ekai rāg alapai* : *omkār* is the one *dhvani* (Logos) the *rāga* (Music of Melody) of the One, *Guru Granth*, p. 885.
23. *Hukami rajāi Calāṇa, Nānak Likhiā nāl*; *Guru Nānak* : *Japuji*.
24. *Pañcami vī ākāsu kari, kar chaṭan adiṣṭu samāi*. The fifth element is ether, the immanent spirit of the Creator pervades as the unseen sixth principle.

Bhāi Gurdās : Vār 1:2

25. *Dehi Sivā bar moh, ehai* : Give me, O Lord, this boon. *Guru Gobind Singh*.
26. *Siv Sakati dā khelu melu prakirti pasārā* : The interplay of Śiva and Śakti is the manifestation of Nature. *Bhāi Gurdās Vār 2:19*.
27. *Siv Sakati dehī mahi pāe* : In the body are placed siva and Sakti Spirit and cosmic energy, *Guru Granth*, p. 163.
28. *Sakati gai bhram kaṭiā Siva joti vartayā*, *Gur Granth*, P. 163.
29. *Hatha doven kityo siva sakti vartaya Siva āge sakti harya eve hari bhaya*.
30. *Sive Sakati mīṭiā cūkā andhiārā*, *Guru Granth*. 163.
31. *Sive Sakati āp upāi kartā aṭe hukam vartāe*. *Ibid*. Ānand paṇḍi 26.
32. *Sive Sakati no sādḥ kai cand sūr deh rat sadhae*, *Bhāi Gurdās, Vār 7:2*.
33. *Sive Sakati vic khel kar yog bhog bahu calit banaya*, *Ibid*, vār, 18:6.
34. *Sive Sakati dā mel dubidhā hovai, trai gun māyā khel bhar bhar dhovai*, *Bhāi Gurdās, Vār 21:6*.
35. *Sive Sakati nu langhkai, gurmukhi sukhpal sahaje samādhe*. *Ibid*.
36. *Cār Cār varn che darshan vartai vartārā*, *Sive Sakati vic vanaj kar, caudh haṭ sah vanjārā, sac vanaj gur haṭiā sādḥ sangat kirat kartārā*. *Ibid*, 39:6.
37. *Bhāi Gurdās, Vār 1 paṇḍi 3*.
38. *Karte ki mit kartā jānai, kai janai gur surā*.

Guru Nānak : *Omkar* : 3

39. *Trai lok dipak sabad*, *Guru Granth*, p. 1113.
40. *Bhāi Gurdās, 39:17; 32:2; 24:11*.

41. *Ibid*, *Kabit savaiya* : 608.
42. *bāṇi guru, guru hai bāṇi vic bāṇi amrit sāre. saci baṇi sac sabad hai* : The true gospel of the Guru is the true Word.
43. *sabad muā vicon āp gavāe, Guru Granth*, p. 361.
44. *Sabad mare phir nāmare, Ibid*, p. 649.
45. Aldous Huxely : *The Perennial philosophy*, p. 316.
46. *Sabad surat avgahan bimal mat, sabad surat gur gayān ko Prakās hai.*  
*Sabad Surat sam dristi dib jyaot, Sabad Surat liv anbhahi abhyās hai*  
*Bhāi Gurdās : Kābit*, 62.
47. *Adriṣṭ agocar pakḍi gursabadi, Guru Granth*. p. 1114.
48. *Kiratn unā kā miṭāsi nāhi, oi apanā āpi khāhi.*  
*Guru Granth*, 1183.
49. *Gur Kā sabad kāṭe koḍi karma Ibid*, p. 1195.
50. *Koḍ koṭantar pāpu kere ek ghaḍi mahi khovai.*  
*Guru Granth*, 438.
51. *bahut janam bichre the Mādho eh janam tumare lekhe.*  
*Guru Granth*, 694.
52. *Guru Nānak, Sidha Gosti* : 25.
53. *āvāgaun tudh āp racāya, Nānak, I, Vār Āsā 4 āvāgaun kiā kārtār.*  
*Guru Granth*, 842.
54. *Guru Gobind Singh : Bacitra Nāṭak : Apni Kathā*, chapter 6.
55. *Haumai hoi bandhnā, phir joni pāhi, Āsā di Vār*, 7.
56. *Guru Granth*, p. 1256.
57. *Nānak Dukhiā sabh Sansār, Guru Granth*, p. 945.
58. *Guru Granth*, P. 757.
59. *Guru Granth*, P. 491.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 1091.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 698.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 614.

### III

## THE BASIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICAL THOUGHT IN SIKHISM

Gurbachan Singh Talib

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### THE CREED AS BASIS FOR THE MORAL LIFE

The Sikh Creed, expressed in the form of devotional poetry, enunciating truths of the spirit, while lifting man into the sphere of transcendent experience and confirming in him certain attitudes, particularly those called *bairāga* (dispassion towards the material world and its concerns) and *bhakti* (devotion to God conceived of as the Beloved Supreme), is also by virtue of its idealism a great guide to conduct. This conduct has various stages in which it is made manifest—the stage of “conversion of the heart” which witnesses the qualities of tolerance, humility, forgiveness and love; the stage of spiritually-guided action such as restraint and the everprayerful attitude of mind, and later still, the stage of fruitful action in the world of human relations, making man one of the Elect of God. This process of conversion and conditioning of conduct is hard, lifelong and unending, calling for self-surrender and self-examination, involving severe discipline, as has been testified in numerous pronouncements of the holy Gurus, from Guru Nānak onwards. Sikh teachings emphasize the inescapable relationship with conduct, without which the seeker may be said to rest only in a preliminary stage of initiation. His faith must be tested and made the basis of conduct—“in each moment”, God-consciousness must impel him to pure conduct. The religious life is conceived of neither as a set of philosophical postulates apprehended intellectually, nor an ecstasy or emotion, as in the case of purely devotional creeds—it is all these also—but as a way of life, guided by the light of



faith. Such a consummation is reiterated and emphasized again and again in Sikh teachings, and no doubt or vagueness is allowed to remain about this.

Further to clarify what has been stated above, in Sikh teachings the Guru's Word, enunciating the creed has two distinct but related facets—a basic Truth, which is not merely thought, idea or concept, since it is not arrived at by a process of reasoning but by the spiritual vision, and the Power (here again this term must be deliberately retained, since the force of the Guru's Word consists not merely in presenting a concept, but in being able to transform the whole personality), the power to 'transform mere humanity into divine being,'<sup>1</sup> in the striking figure used by Guru Nānak. The Truth in which the soul is called by the spiritual Guide, the Guru, to rest is thus the basis of all conduct, both individual and social. These two aspects of the creed are inseparable, inasmuch as the process of self-purification and transcendence of human frailty cannot but be based, to be fruitful, on the Truth inculcated and spiritually assented to. Such assent, to which numerous names are given—the most comprehensive being *giān*, *jñāna* or Enlightenment—would remain barren, and fruitless if it is not to transform conduct in sphere extending far beyond the individual search after ritual purification. There is, thus an integrated view of the spiritual and moral life which Guru Nānak enunciated in his word and those who imbibed it tried to realize its essence in their own daily conduct. Before I proceed to elaborate some of these points, it will be necessary to point out that the accent in Guru Nānak's teachings falls on two things in particular; against the limitation of the spiritual and moral conduct to ritual actions, and against confining the moral action to the individual self, or to such narrow confines as one's tribe, race or denomination.

The spiritual path is the path of seeking true enlightenment by the processes of reverence, contemplation and absorption. These are designated by the Guru as *suniai* (lit. listening), *mannai* and *dhiāna*. The seeker, who has undergone this discipline must

then practise the Truth in his life, and spread its blessings around. He may thus become one of the 'Elect' (pañca), or a 'mighty hero' (*jodh mahā bala sūra*).<sup>2</sup> The implication of this heroism is moral and spiritual exclusively. He may, by the conduct of his life, attain Bliss (*ānand*) and immunity from transmigration. (The *Japuji* says : those in whose souls is lodged God, are neither under the sway of *māiā* (illusion); nor subject to spiritual death, i.e. transmigration). Ultimately, through them mankind is redeemed. This is their role. In the last lines of the *Japuji*, the Guru says :

*'Those engaging in devotion to God undertake hard  
endeavour;*

*Their faces are illumined by the Light Divine and many  
are liberated through them'.*

In the great disquisitional composition, *Vār Āsā*, God-inspired men are defined thus :

*"True servants without desire,  
Contemplating ever the Eternal;  
Never straying into evil, they serve  
Righteousness through pure endeavour;  
Rejecting the lure of the world, they partook little of the  
pleasures of the flesh."*

(*Guru Granth*, pp.466-67)

This theme of the inseparable association of spiritual enlightenment with the moral life resting on restraint of desire and endeavour in the way of the service of mankind will be developed in greater detail later in this essay.

#### THE ESSENCE OF SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

In contemplating the essence and nature, so to speak, of spiritual enlightenment, we may have to grasp certain fundamental concepts underlying Indian philosophical thought as it was developed first in the enunciation of the Upaniṣads, (which are devotion and vision expressed in the form of parable and poetic aphorism), and later in the more systematic philosophical systems called the 'six *darsanas*' each adumbrating a particu-

lar thesis based on certain psychological-epistemological postulates. Out of these 'six *darsanas*', the basic ideas propounded particularly in two, have had an immense influence on Indian thought, belief and action through the ages. These are the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga sāstras. The entire climate of Indian spiritual and ethical thinking, it may be said, is conditioned by the thought propounded in these two systems. A certain synthesis of the ideas woven into the very fabric of Indian philosophy is found arrived at in the *Gītā*, which is a spiritual-ethical scripture cast in the form of a dialogue between Arjuna questing after the Truth, and the Lord in the form of Kṛṣṇa, on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Also in the Indian tradition are certain spiritual ideas given wide currency among the masses by the great systems of Jainism and Buddhism which led revolts against the narrow ritualism of Brahmanism. The idea of the nonviolence, the concept of liberation called Nirvāṇa and the enfranchisement of the languages spoken by the common folk as against Sanskrit, were some of the contributions of these creeds, which later lost much of their influence. These systems of faith also exalted the life of the recluse to the highest state that man might attain, and have given a certain permanent slant to Indian thinking, which is still very greatly influential in determining values.

In Indian religious thought a vital role is also played by the mythological and epic literature that had been developing since the earliest times. The Purāṇas, and the epics are mighty compositions built on certain fundamental ethical and philosophical ideas, and have served as the staple of religious teaching for the masses. The characters and incidents in these have acquired a deep symbolic value. While most people accept them to be literally true down to their most incredible details, a more discriminating interpretation would be to regard them in allegorical and symbolical terms. In essence, epic and mythology, as matters of belief and for illustrative purposes, affect Indian religious thought, at almost every level.

Afterwards, in the centuries around the period of the birth

of Islam appeared certain powerful formulations in thought, such as the doctrine of *advaita* (non-duality) in the philosophy of Saṅkara, and commentaries and elucidations supporting a process leading to a logical impossibility in denying altogether the existence of anything except the undifferentiated Being. The thought of Rāmānuja, of Mādhava and of their later disciples came down to the medieval age in which Guru Nānak appeared, in the form of an amalgam, containing much that was mutually contradictory, and yet basically affirming certain postulates, which came to be regarded as almost axiomatic, and which in essence may be called Indian or Hindu thought. During the medieval period certain other emphases were added to this body of thought. Such was, for example, the new orientation of the idea of *yoga*, called *haṭha* (the way of force) which made an elaborate ritual of physicopsychic culture an essential element in its practice, and further exalted the monastic ideal to the highest state attainable by man. Another was the development of the *bhakti* cult, which equated the spiritual life with an emotion which was in essence a sublimation of the erotic in relation to the Deity (usually Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu) contemplated as the embodiment of Beauty and the object of fervent love and passion. While *yoga* sought to impart to the seeker *vairāgya*, dispassion and ultimately the vision included by human passion, *bhakti* sought to arouse passion to the pitch of fervour and ecstasy. These mutually contradictory paths were both believed to lead to union with the Supreme. Their fusion was sought to be brought about in a life rich in comprehensive spiritual experience. As a matter of fact, most of the teachers of medieval Indian express themselves in a language which touches both the passionless idea of *yoga* and the fervent idea of *bhakti*, though in the case of several, both *yoga* and *bhakti* are understood to bear a sense which eschews the narrowing adumbration of either. The ideas both of *yoga* and *bhakti*, deeply spiritualized, appear in the vision of Guru Nānak.

In order to understand those aspects of the Indian

philosophical thought which are seen to manifest themselves in the spiritual vision of Guru Nānak, it is not necessary to enter into a detailed study of any of the systems of this philosophy. The Guru is not making a systematic exposition of any aspect of this philosophy. Some of its fundamental postulates, however, shape his spiritual experience, and serve, so to speak, as its warp and woof. This spiritual experience issues in the form of devotional poetry, which, while it moves the mind to integrate this experience with the deeper layers of feeling, and make it thus a part of the personality, brings it also to an intensity of contemplation, so that a state of enlightenment is attained in which the tumult of material desire is stilled, and moral reason is revealed. This moral reason is the direction taken by the awakened mind to eschew whatever is low, of the ego, and to seek the highest good, called in Indian spiritual tradition, as also in the Guru's word, *paramārtha* (the Supreme Truth), that is, Liberation from the bondage of desire, which is known to be the root of moral evil, as also of human suffering.

In the spiritual vision embodied in the Guru's word, the Sāṅkhya psychological postulate of the 'three qualities' is accepted as the basis for the concept of spiritual ascent. The seeker must set it up as his aim to transcend the 'three qualities' of *tamas* (sloth, ignorance), *rajas* (passion, urge for action) and *sattva* (intelligence, the mind, though not the spiritual awakening).

The Absolute (*brahma* or more accurately, *brahman*<sup>3</sup> with the last syllable unaccented) is beyond these 'three attributes' and hence is known in Indian spiritual thought as *nirguṇa* (Unattributed). The goal of the spiritual life (and here we are entering the realm of the other system, *yoga*—Union with the Supreme) is to transcend these 'three qualities' and to attain the state of 'passionlessness' which is emancipation from ignorance, desire, and involvement in the material objectives. Thus may ignorance cease and man 'see' Reality or the Absolute. This state may be Enlightenment (*giān*, *jñāna* or trance, *turiya*), but its one characteristic is the individual's transcendence of worldly

desire. Here we are moving close to defining the vital relationship between Enlightenment and the moral state. The moral state is the state of Enlightenment expressing itself through will and action. Thus is seen a chain of reasoning, in which Enlightenment and morality are not only inter-related, but also mutually inclusive. As the *Gītā* phrases it, noble action is "action into purity by the fire of Enlightenment" (*jñānāgnī-Dagdhā-Karma*). Before searching for the manifestation of these ideas and ideals in the Guru's teaching, one or two more fundamental concepts of Indian philosophy must be considered, as these too are found almost ubiquitously in the Guru's Word or *bāṇi*.

The idea of a dichotomy in the universe between the Absolute, *brahma*, which is the only Reality, Immutable and Eternal, and *māyā* or illusion is of ancient origin in Indian metaphysical thinking. This splendid idea is indeed one of the summits attained by man's contemplative vision—the realization of a Reality to which nothing that happens in the world revealed by the senses is relevant. To have a vision of this ultimate Reality, to be merged in it (which is *yoga* in the highest sense) has been viewed as the goal of the Indian spiritual endeavour. To this sovereign idea Śaṅkara, in the ninth century gave a particularly forceful expression which has in its turn become what may be called Indian spiritual thought *par excellence*. He further adumbrated the idea of all that is experienced by the senses as illusion (*māyā*), which is lifted when the soul is awakened, and instead of the senses, the spiritual vision is the medium of experience. Śaṅkara expressed his thought through the famous simile of the serpent and the rope. The rope appears to be a serpent to the gaze of illusion; when the illusion is lifted, it is seen to be what it is—a rope. So also with the spiritual life. The spiritually-awakened person sees phenomena as mutable, unreal. In moral terms, he must see these as of no worth; hence to be discarded. Thus, man must pursue the Real (Being or *satya*, *brahma*) and not worldly objects. Here again, spirituality and morality intersect each other. To this grand postulate Śaṅkara

gave the name *advaita* (Non-duality). In brief, it means that there is only one Reality—*brahman*, Being or God—and matter just does not exist. This subtle idea is hard of realization, but is the basis of Indian spiritual thought. It is also fundamentally present in the vision of Guru Nānak.

The term *advaita* itself does not occur in spiritual-devotional compositions of the Sikh Gurus, but certain words expressive of this idea or of its opposite, that is, the attitude of mind fixed in worldly objectives, do occur in several places. Thus, we have the words *māyā* (illusion), *moha* (delusion, attachment), *dubidhā* (being of two minds), *durmati* (polluted thinking), *kūḍh* (falsehood, i.e., false notions) and several others which reflect back upon the conviction of *advaita*. A caution, however, is necessary here. *Advaita*, in the exegetic and expository thought of the philosophers and savants of India has come to mean many things. One of the commonest interpretations attaching to it is a kind of pantheism—the idea that all that exists is God or the Absolute. This is perhaps a perversion fundamentally of the original meaning and purport, which is to assert that nothing exists but the Absolute. To assert that all that exists is God, is obviously the contrary and wrong interpretation. That God pervades man (*Soham*—I am He) is different from asserting that any man may be God. Yet, in the confused thinking which has been characteristic of much religious teaching in India, various and contradictory interpretations of *advaita*, as of other fundamental principles are to be met with. But one thing is definite; in Guru Nānak's teachings the repudiation of worldliness and of the illusion that material objectives are of any worth is the very base, the very foundation. To take only two very well-known pronouncements.

It is recorded in the oldest account extant of the life of Guru Nānak that in his trance or vision sublime of God, he uttered to pay homage to the Creator these words, expressive of the indivisible absolute existence of God. In the original these are : *ādi sac, jugādi sac, hai bhī sac, Nānak hosi bhi sac*. These words mean : the Eternal ever was, ever shall be; the Eternal alone

exists; nothing shall last but the Eternal.<sup>4</sup> This obviously is a rendering of the fundamental idea of *advaita*, as correctly interpreted in terms mystical and poetic, rather than ratiocinative. This great and basic utterance precedes the rest of the *Japuji*.

Again, at the end of the first stanza of the *Japuji*, occurs the seeker's query: "How to find Truth, and demolish the wall of falsehood?" Here "falsehood" stands for the great illusion, *māyā*, which is the source of desire, worldliness. So, to demolish this illusion is the one great, fundamental task facing the seeker. Only when that is done, does the spiritual state, and as a result of that, noble actions emerge.

#### NON-DUALITY AND THE MORAL LIFE

That according to the Guru the moral life is not a matter of a few commandments or a code or a ritual, but the fruit of a life directed towards spiritual quest, involving incredibly hard discipline, is demonstrated by his pronouncements everywhere. As a matter of fact, there is hardly any other theme in the Guru's compositions which receives a like emphasis or reiteration. A few quotations, picked up almost at random, will show how fundamental and important is the quest of the vision of Nonduality in the Guru's spiritual-moral scheme.

##### (a) *The Vision of Eternity :*

*"One God's True Throne will last; all else shall pass away."*

(page 1279)

*"Empire, wealth, beauty—all are shadows,*

*When the sun is up, all places become visible,<sup>5</sup>*

*The physical body, great name and pride of caste—all are unreal.*

*With God it is every day; in this world every night.*

(page 1257)<sup>6</sup>

##### (b) *The Absoluteness of Being or Brahma :*

*"He is Himself māyā and Viṣṇu.<sup>7</sup>*

*Himself creates the Real as well as enjoys phenomenon;*

*He is the calf and the milk;*



*He is the temple of the body and its sustaining pillar".*  
(page 1190)

*"The noblest of diets is the pure Immaculate Name;  
Only the purest souls can behold that infinite Eternal  
Light;*

*Whenever I look, nothing see I but the One Absolute".*  
(page 227)

*"What should the yogi have to fear ?  
Trees, plants and all that is inside and outside, is He  
Himself".*

(page 223)  
*"That which is inside man, the same is outside of him;  
nothing else exists;*

*By divine prompting look upon all existence as One and  
undifferentiated; the same light penetrates all  
existence".*

(page 599)  
*"The Divine (like the lotus) is in the water, yet untouched  
by it;*

*Its light penetrates this water entire;  
None is near, and none far;  
I find it ever near, and chant its praises.*

*Nothing else exists inside the outside (man);  
All happens as He will it;  
Listen, Bharthari: This is what Nānak says after  
contemplation."*

(page 411-12)

In the last extract above, in phrases like 'None is near, and none far', the moral vision emerging from the apprehension of Non-duality may be clearly seen.

**(c) The false vision of duality as the source of evil and suffering :**

*"My friend, māyā leads astray through illusions;  
One in illusion's grip is like an abandoned wife, not  
caressed by her lord;  
Such a one wanders about all over, banished from home;  
In error she wanders about hill and desert, her heart  
shaken with delusions;*

*How may one separated since eternity have union with  
God ?*

*Robbed (of the Vision) by egoism she must wail and  
cry."*

(page 60)

As expressed in the last extract above, from the human vision being clouded by duality, arises the moral evil of egoism, (or more specifically, egocentredness), which is the root cause of ill-doing. In the Guru's word, one of the most recurring key-terms is *haumai* (I-ness, egoism) which is regarded as synonymous with the most insidious evil. This egoism is the consequence of illusion, of looking upon the individual self as of paramount importance. In those whose illusion has been lifted by the vision of Non-duality, the attitude inevitably developing is selflessness, to which various expressive and descriptive names may be given, such as humility, altruism, love and many more. It may be profitable to pursue the theme of duality and Non-duality a little further, as it influences the moral life. The terms and symbols used are very often periphrases of the ideas of Non-duality (ego-lessness) and duality (ego-centredness) :

*"To one intoxicated with the wine of māyā no contentment  
can come;*

*Contentment and liberation come through attachment  
to the Real.<sup>8</sup>*

*Man is proud of physical power, wealth, woman ;*

*Nothing however, shall be his in death.*

*One may indulge to satiety in pleasures of the flesh ;*

*His wealth shall fall to others ; his body a heap of ashes;*

*Dust unto dust shall go ; all is vanity.*

*Except through God's Name impurity of mind<sup>9</sup> shall not  
go.*

*He who lives unsullied by the world and knows all to be  
God's ;*

*He who dedicates body and soul to Him whose it is ;*

*Such a one shall not be subject to transmigration.*

*Nānak, such a one indeed is pure<sup>10</sup> and shall be immersed  
in God".*

(page 832)

*In a vision of the human life, says the Guru :*

*"(Its) door is of sorrow ;*

*Violence is the doorkeeper ; hope and fear its door-panels.*

*Its moat is filled with the water of māyā ; this house is built on water.*

*In this house of peril man can live only if seated on the cushion of Divine Knowledge."*<sup>11</sup>

(page 877)

In another vision, after delineating the gross nature of man, as "crow-like, swooping on crumbs", the Guru resumes the theme of the nature of human life :

*"This life is house of sand built on a whirlpool ;*

*Like a bubble just visible in torrential rain ;*

*In substance a drop, moulded in form on God's wheel :*

*Know all life to be slave to the Real"*<sup>12</sup>

(page 1187)

*Thoughts of duality are impure and ignorant ;*

*The egoist strays about in a cloud of mist".*

(page 1190)

The above extracts again reveal the fundamental dependence of the moral life on the realization of Truth, which alone guides and directs life to the attainment of the Supreme Truth (*paramārtha*). It is egoism which stands in the way of man's viewing the whole of existence as undifferentiated, as a harmony; the attitude resulting from egoism is duality or self-centredness, which sees the individual ego as different from the stream of existence. To annul this sense of separation is to achieve Non-duality, which is the basis of the moral attitude.

***The Mind and the Process of Restraint-*** In Indian philosophical literature, the human mind has been designated as restless (*cañcal*). The achievement aimed at by religious discipline, of which one of the most elaborated thought out forms in yoga, is to still the movement, the tumult of the mind, which is essence means curbing its play of desire, which is the basis of egoism and the 'cause of the pursuit of those actions which may be called 'sin'. The Mind, restrained and disciplined, achieves not only

that vision of Being which is Non-duality but is also inspired to seek to do good in the realm of action. This relationship between the awakened, purified mind and the goodness in action which is the goal of the life lived according to religion, is never allowed to be forgotten in the teachings of the Sikh religion. The enlightened mind, which has risen above the pursuit of desire, is characterized by Guru Nānak's successors in the holy Office of Guruship have, each in his own words, reiterated and emphasized the spirit of this teaching. A few quotations may be reproduced to illustrate this point of view :

*"Immerse thy light in the Divine light; thy consciousness in the universal mind.*

*When violence, egoism and restlessness of the mind are gone sorrows vanish.*

*Whosoever through devotion lodges God in his heart, attains union with Him.*

*Some indulge in sensual pleasure ;*

*Futile it is to attach oneself to that which is evanescent.*

*Truly blessed in divine union is the woman<sup>13</sup> who has the love of the Lord.*

*The man of God extinguishes the four fires,<sup>14</sup> and so dying in God, finds the water of the Lord...."*

*(pages 21-22)<sup>15</sup>*

*"Through contemplation of the Divine, the mind no longer wanders ; its restlessness ceases.*

*The mind, unstable as the wind, thus acquires peace through devotion."*

*(page 634)*

*"Live desireless amidst the desires of the world."*

*(page 1043)*

*"Desire and pursuit of the world<sup>16</sup> are both eliminated ; the mind is emancipated from māyā with the three qualities.*

*The transcendent desirelessness<sup>17</sup> is attained by Divine prompting, through holy company."*

*(page 356)*

Man in the grip of passions is represented by a powerful image ;

"My abode is in this lake of the world :  
 God created water as well as fire.<sup>18</sup>  
 Caught in the mire of ignorance, my feet move not,  
 Wherever I look, I feel sinking down"

(page 357)

The moral state is however, attained, thus :  
 "Nānak, contentment the true Teacher is the tree :  
 The fruit is ever juicy and fresh; it ripens through good  
 action and meditation.  
 Eating thereof is true joy and honour, and the greatest  
 of charities".

(page 147)

The spiritual state is further characterised as in the  
 extracts given below :

"The world is oppressed with desire;<sup>19</sup>  
 Contentment comes not except through the True  
 Preceptor :  
 Through the poised mind peace comes, and man finds  
 honour at the Portal."

(page 1345)

Employing the figure of the brāhmaṇa, receiving ritual  
 charity to confer merit on the giver, the Guru gives as spiritualized  
 version of what he begs of the Divine Giver :

"Contenance and purity my rice; mercy my wheat;  
 attainment to God my leaf-plate and offering;  
 Good actions my milk; contentment my ghee-such are  
 the gifts I seek.

I ask for the gift of the milch-cow of forgiveness and  
 forbearance;

Of this cow, let the mind fixed in God, such the milk,  
 The vesture I beg is God's praise and a life of noble  
 striving.

May Nānak ever meditate on God's qualities."

(p. 1329)

The mind involved in desire, on the other hand, finds  
 description equally powerful in this figure:-

"Man is born in desire; desire draws him to different  
 kinds of pleasure.

*Desire leads him in manacles, with buffets and blows.  
Bound in evils, man is punished; his liberation comes  
through spiritual awakening."*

(page 61)

In another place, first giving praise to the men of God,  
the Guru says about the characteristics of the  
unregenerate worldling:

*"In the hour after, other ways diverge and the mental  
faculties get scattered.  
Many are fallen into the ocean,<sup>90</sup> are tossing in water  
beyond extrication;  
At a later hour still, hunger, thirst and desire raise loud  
howl;  
Even though all food turns to dust, still man loves to  
indulge his palate;  
In the next hour one drowns and eyes closed, passes  
into slumber; with such momentary existence, man  
still enters into strife and prolongs, contentions.  
All hours are propitious if there be love of God in the  
heart.  
Nānak, if the Lord is lodged in the heart, that is the true  
ritual bath,"*

(page 145-146)

The above discussion has been intended to show that according to the teaching of Guru Nānak, the moral life is the fruit of a life of devotion and quest after spiritual purity. Without such purity, the mind does not attain the state of poise, and is involved in desire and enmeshed in egoism, and equally far removed from the Vision of Non-duality and from moral action.

**The Moral Life and Ritual - The Spiritual Quest and Morality-** Guru Nānak saw ritual as what it is - Something purely external a form, and unless informed with the true spiritual and moral urge, a sham. People- more so perhaps in India than in other parts of the world - are prone to seek short cuts to the spiritual and moral life by performing certain ritual deeds only, and after these, are content that the objective of religious life has been achieved. Overgrown emphasis on ritual had been the bane

of the Indian religious life for millennia before Guru Nānak appeared on the scene in the fifteenth century; and had led to gross corruption, hypocrisy and delusion. The emphasis on ritual was as much characteristic of orthodox Hinduism and other cults stemming from it, as of Islam, which by then had become the creed of a considerable proportion of the Indian population, particularly in the northern regions spreading eastward. Ritual not only was delusion, it also divided cult from cult, and was the visible form of innumerable sects and sub-sects. It was a kind of substitute, spirituality and morality. Its rejection, therefore, by Guru Nānak is of immense significance not only to the true understanding of his view of the spiritual life, but also of what he considered to be the true morality. In exposing the sham of ritual, the Guru exhorted men to reject it and instead embrace moral life, whose outer symbol the ritual performances would be, if at all they must be observed. Thus, about the ritual of sacred bathing at certain holy spots, river-banks, tanks etc. (regarded traditionally as sixty-eight in number), the Guru says in the *Japuji* : 'I would bathe at the spots considered sacred, if thereby I might hope to please Him' i.e. God. The implication, of course, is that such ceremonies by themselves would not win God's approbation, without man cultivating the moral life. In another place, the Guru has compared those who bathe at sacred places to attain merit, with jars full of poison which are washed from the outside. The meaning of course, is that the evil inside them is not removed despite ritual performances, 'Thy praises,' says the Guru apostrophizing God, 'is Gangā and Banaras', both of which are symbolic of whatever is holiest. 'Devotion'<sup>21</sup> is equivalent to bathing at the sixty-eight sacred places', this is how the Guru has expressed this vision in the *Japuji*. The human mind, in the performance of ritual actions, without self-purification, in another place is compared to 'a serpent enclosed in a basket' whose poison still remains even though thus restricted.

Another ritual act, very wide-spread and so well-known which without a corresponding awakening of the moral life is without meaning, is the assumption of the Guru the thread is no more

than what it is, a bit of cotton spun and twisted-if it does not at the same time induce in the wearer the restraints and activities which are the essence of morality. In the great disquisitional devotional composition, *Vār Āsā*, the Guru in one of its loftiest passages, first defines the spirit and moral meaning of wearing the thread. "From the cotton of compassion, the yarn of contentment, the knot of continence and the twist of truthful living-this is true *janeu*, O pandit : if such thou hast, put it on me.' Further, continuing the theme in a still more exalted key says the Guru, 'What hypocrisy is this? Those who wear round their necks, have thrown the thread of restraint neither over their passions nor over their desire for woman. Daily are their faces fouled with shameful lusts. Neither their hands nor their feet are under the (thread) restraint of moral life. Their eyes and their tongues know not any thread (discipline); unrestrained, loose they wander through life; and yet twist and put the thread on others.... Behold, world, this wonder-the blind in soul are known as the wise!<sup>22</sup>

A very wide-spread cult in India particularly from early medieval time was that of the *Yogis*. This was new creed, though the name and some of its basic spiritual ideas were taken from the ancient *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali. This medieval Yoga too was a matter of highly elaborated ritual which though different from the Brahmanical ritual, yet lent support to it. The common people looked upon all manner of priesthood - *bhāhmaṇa*, *Yogi*, *saṃnyāsi*, *vairāgi* and other - as equally worthy of respect, and followed an amalgam of rituals drawn from various cults. In its higher forms, this neo-yoga was an ascetic creed, devoted to the search after the undifferentiated state of Attributelessness, called *śūnya* or the Void. Its ritual was a form of esoteric physical culture, involving control of breath (*prāṇāyāma*) and arousing the secret power of a vein, called *kuṇḍalini* or the coiled serpent, believed to lie dormant at the foot of the vertebrate column. Without going into the details of this form of yoga, which would not be strictly relevant to this discussion, it may be said that this form of Yoga was the pursuit of the state of passionlessness and



lower down, of *śakti* or Power which meant the performance of miracles etc. When debased, Yoga, became a 'dark' creed with magic fetishism and even courted obscenity in certain extreme and grotesque form of Tantrism. To the Guru all this elaborate ritual and lore of yoga, after which its practitioners appeared to have gone made almost, appeared to be pointless as far as the essence of the spiritual and moral life was concerned. In the Guru's discussion with the *yogis* or *sidhas*, of which poetic narratives are given by the Guru in the *Sidhagostī* (Debate with the Sidhas), in the *Vār* of *Rāga Rāmkaṭī* and at many other places by implication, the contradiction between the view-point of the *yogis* (who followed ritual and *haṭha-yoga* by forcible methods) and that of the spiritual and moral life, comes out in striking forms. In *Sidhagostī* treating the *Yogis'* insistence on ritual, *haṭha* and mystic life as matters of less consequence, the Guru exhorts them to cultivate the spiritual and moral vision. Thus, in one place, his characterization of the true *yogi's* spiritual state is given thus;

*"Let the restless, impatient mind be fixed in the Eternal  
and find a prop in God;*

*Thus will the Creator provide for man union with Himself,  
and love for the Eternal be born."*

*"As is the lotus untouched by the water, or the duck by  
the stream;*

*So, man fixing his mind on the Eternal may cross the  
ocean of the world-thus doth Nānak state the Truth."*

In the *Japuji*, taking up the yogic symbols and vesture, the Guru gives a spiritual-ethical meaning to these, as in the case of the sacred thread. "Make meditation thy ear-rings endeavour thy begging-bowl, meditation thy pouch... enlightenment thy ashes."<sup>23</sup>

As stated in the brief though great narrative piece of the Guru's spiritual career by Bhāī Gurdās, the Guru on meeting the *sidha-yogis*, upbraided them for removing themselves from the scene of human life, where they must as a matter of moral duty, bring the light of higher things to mankind, and work for

their spiritual welfare. In the words of Bhāi Gurdās : 'The *Sidhas* have concealed themselves in the mountains; who may then take mankind across (the ocean of suffering?)'. The purport of this criticism of the *yogis* is obvious. To the Guru, the spiritual life must find its consummation, its fulfillment in the sphere of moral duty, which implies facing and solving the spiritual and moral problems of mankind. These problems involve ignorance, sin and evil which characterize man's individual and collective actions in this world. To purify the world of human relations is as much the duty of the man of religion as to seek light for himself. In view of the existence of so much evil and suffering in the world, which the man of God must endeavour to remove, the Guru found it a serious lapse in the *Yogis* that they had by their retreat, avoided facing moral responsibility. This was about the better among them, men who had spent their lives in suppressing certain impulses of nature and had attained<sup>24</sup> to certain levels of spiritual enlightenment. About the generality of those professing to be *yogis*, however, it could not be said that there was much about them that was admirable. The Guru has made much trenchant criticism of the contradiction and hypocrisy of those who professing to renounce the world, are yet covetous of the things of the world in their hearts.

The life of the recluse and the ascetic has been held in India of old to be the most exalted, because of the belief that such acts denote the pure life of spiritual attainment. While the Guru has given a place of great importance to the curbing of desire through a life of self-discipline, he has at the same time unmistakably pointed out that man must fully share the moral responsibility which devolves on him by Ordinance of the Creator. Over the life of the recluse the Guru has exalted the station of the *grihasthi*, which literally means 'householder'. But this term will not yield its full significance if it is interpreted too literally, and hence narrowly. The *grihasthi* is the person fixed amidst moral duty, which he must face and assume even at the cost of suffering. The Guru's meaning is unmistakably clear : our life is circumscribed

by material surroundings, yet must man transcend these to affirm spiritual and moral fulfillment. For the spiritual moral pursuit the Guru uses the term *dharma*, which is the ancient Indian term with a wide connotation, implying not only certain experiences of the soul, but also pure, noble action. Revealing a deep insight into true ideal of human life, the Guru declares in the *Japuji* :  
 "Human life is passed amidst the sequence of night and day, seasons, dates and days: amidst all this play is fixed the earth- the theatre of righteous action." The human body, rather than being looked upon as unclean and a source merely of sin, has been called 'the human frame, the palace and temple of God' (page 1256). On page 57, the body has again been called the temple (or house) of God.' The entire creation has been infusion with the Divine but also because of the moral urge which lies as basis of the universe, and which must ultimately frustrate evils. Says the Guru in the great poem, *Vār Āsā* :

*"Holy are the continents created by Thee ;  
 Holy Thy universe  
 Holy the worlds and the forms therein.  
 Holy are Thy doings and all that in Thy mind"*

(page 463).

Again : *"He fashioned the vessels<sup>25</sup> and filled them with  
 amrita"*

(page 686)<sup>26</sup>

The practice of piety is not complete without man discharging moral duty, which in the idiom made current by the Guru and stamped with impress of his soul, has been called *sevē*. Literally this means 'service', But the connotation here too is immensely wider, and embraces all manner of action emancipated from any of the urges of the ego, such as self-interest, the desire for profit or the exercise of malice etc. It is the equivalent of what in the ancient ethical thought of India had been called *nīṣkāma- Karma* (action free from desire). As the Guru has expressed it in several places, for the spiritual-moral fulfillment, such an attitude, rendered free of ego-centred desire is the essence of spirituality and morality. In *Sidha-gosttī*, the great discussion

with the yogis, the Guru defined the man of emancipated soul in these terms:

*"Man must find the seclusion of absorption in the One and maintain indifference amidst the attractions of the world.*

*One who thus has a vision of the Inaccessible,  
Unknowable Creator, Nānak is a slave to him."*

Again, on page 1403 we find the line :

*"Live desireless amidst the desires of the world",*

Again : *"To quench the thirst of desire seek the water of God's name :*

*No such ocean is there but God"*

(page 1411)

*"Meditation on the Eternal illumines the mind-  
By this is it rendered indifferent in the midst of the  
poisons of evil*

(page 661)

After giving expression at another place to the superficial external view of yoga as consisting in ritual, the Guru defines true yoga thus : 'To live immaculate amidst the impurities of the world-this is the yoga-practice.'<sup>27</sup> (page 730). From the extracts given above, out of a number expressing the same idea through a variety of figures of speech and imagery, two points emerge : One, that moral action is such action as characterizes the person who has achieved indifference or desirelessness and escape from the illusion, *māyā*. Only one who has attained this state is conditioned to act morally.<sup>28</sup> Further, that man must live amidst what the Guru has called the "impurities" of the world. This means the world of human relations, with all the evil manifesting itself and multiplying. The man of God must keep himself clean amidst this evil. He must again as mentioned earlier, look upon the world as the 'theatre of righteous action' That means that he must act to defeat evil, and not be like the *sidhas* with their escapist attitude. Arising out of this attitude are certain further implication for the conduct of man in relation to the life of the community, which will be discussed at some length later in this essay.

To revert to the theme of *seva* or action free from selfish

motivation, the Guru as mentioned before, looks upon this as an essential constituent of religious life as the consummation of it. The few texts given below will specify this aspect of his vision.

*"I have learnt by the light given by the perfect master :*

*Recluse, hero, celibate or samnāyāsi*

*None may expect to earn merit without devoted service-*

*Service in which lies the essence of purity.*

(page 992)

*Only through devoted service in this world may one find  
a place at the Divine Portal.'*

(page 26)

*'Through learning man may do good unto others'*

(page 356)

That all through, the Guru is not thinking of ritual acts of piety and charity, but of selfless, devoted action is attested by certain other pronouncements of his. Service of humanity, down to the humblest, which in the thinking of orthodox, convention-ridden religious atmosphere of medieval and pre-medieval India was unthinkable, and to a large extent still is, has been exalted by the Guru to the status of great merit and piety;

*'One who serves the higher castes,*

*Is of great merit indeed.*

*But one who serves those of humble castes.*

*May indeed wear shoes made from my body'*

(page 1256)

Furthermore, that ritual charity is not acceptable as real spiritual devotion, may be readily seen from certain parables related of the Guru showing him opposed to the grand charity feasts of the rich, whose wealth acquired by means of extortion, would not pass muster with God. In the *Vār Āsā*, in a passage expressive of deep moral sensitiveness, the Guru has castigated such priests as sanctify charity given out of the 'stolen' riches of the wealthy. In the hereafter, their theft (what in modern parlance would be called exploitation of the poor) would be detected by the discerning eye of God, and rejected. Nay, more : the priest sanctifying such charity would be arraigned too, and like the accomplice in theft that he would prove to be, his hands would

be chopped off. Herein is one of the many insights into the high and uncompromising standard of rectitude insisted upon by the Guru in the conduct of life.

### ***Fear and Submission : Moral Reason***

For the perfection of the spiritual and moral life, the Guru, in the course of his teaching, which are expressed partly through hymns voicing devotion to and joy in God, and partly through the process of meditation, illuminating the great truths of life, has laid particular emphasis on the cultivation of two sovereign qualities of character. These have been called Fear (*bhāi, bhaya*), and Submission to God's will for which an Arabic word *razā* made current by the Muslim teachers has been used. Corresponding to this *razā* is *hukam* (more accurately *hukm*, also Arabic) i.e. Command or Ordinance. Submission or resignation arise from the recognition of the inscrutable mystery of the Divine Will, which acts out its purposes in ways beyond human comprehension. Right at the opening of the *Japuji*, submission to the Ordinance<sup>29</sup> is inculcated, with an entire stanza devoted to the fundamental faith that all happens as the Divine Will ordains. 'Man would no longer assert his I-ness, were he to understand the Divine Ordinance.' In another place, disapproving highly of those who presume to believe that their own will is operative in the functioning of the world and not God's, the Guru observes : 'Fools and idiots presume to issue commands.'<sup>30</sup> and do what is for God alone to ordain. The clear implication of such thinking is the exaltation of the spirit of humility as a sovereign quality in the character of man. Calling upon man to give up arrogance and pride, says the Guru in *Vār Āsā* : 'Should God cast the eye of His wrath, Kings He reduces to a blade of grass'. In another hymn he has recalled the great and arrogant tyrants of mythology and common lore, such as Rāvaṇa and Duryodhana, who persecuted the innocent and the holy, and who were brought low by the operation of the Divine Ordinance, which is the moral law of the universe. For man, therefore submission and humility of spirit are the qualities by which alone

he may seek his liberation from the bondage into which the evil growing out of *māyā* has thrown him.

As for the other quality, Fear, it may be stated at the outset, that as commended by the Guru as a great quality in the morally and spiritually-oriented personality, it does not precisely mean awe. It is fear, which must be understood in subtle, moral and spiritual implication. Fear, as commended by the Guru, is not merely the instinctive shrinking back from danger or the instinct related to flight. It is the constant in born apprehension, arising from keen spiritual sensitiveness—a tremor of the soul, lest one should do by word, deed or thought, anything that may be evil. Such constant, anxious self-searching, such deep solicitude for doing what is according to the Divine Law, is what the Guru means by fear. Not only, as the Guru says, does the fear of God emancipate man from all other kinds of fear, but it is also in being inspired with such fear alone that man may be able to live as a spiritual and moral being. A few brief quotations will make clear what the Guru has in mind.

*'Let the limbs be dyed in the fear of God and purity, and thy tongue relish truth.*

*On such a one is cast the gracious look of God; all his torments end.'*

(page 19)

*'The mind that is withdrawn from the world, is settled in poise, and is dyed in truth and fear.'*

This theme finds expression also in the teaching of Guru Nānak's successor. Guru Amar Dās, the third pontiff in the Holy Office says:

*'Shall partake of the supreme joy of Enlightenment, and shall hunder never more'.*

(page 21)

*'He who is born and dies with fear of God, and bears such fear in his heart-*

*Nānak, if such a one dies bearing the fear of God, his life is truly fruitful.*

*One who lives without the fear of God, and has pleasure manifold, Nānak,<sup>31</sup> if he dies unmindful of God,*

*his face shall be blackened hereafter.*

(page 149)

Guru Nānak, in a comprehensive vision of the moral and spiritual fruits of living in such fear of God, says :

*"The fear of God is mighty and of great weight,*

*Egoism is worthless<sup>32</sup> and just vociferous.*

*Walk under the weight of such fear.*

*And through Divine grace attain knowledge of God.*

*None crosses the ocean (of māyā) unless he bear fear;*

*Through fear the fear directed life is beautiful with*

*Divine Love,*

*Through fear of the world, the fire of fear blazes in the human frame.*

*Through fear of God and love is moulded spiritual beauty.*

*Without fear of God, all that is uttered is misshapen and worthless-*

*The mould and the shaping strokes are both blind.*

*Fear of God is the abode, and in such abode is fear-*  
*through fear of God worldly fears vanish.*

*The fear of God which eliminates all other fear-how may it be called fear.'*

(page 151)

*'He that abides in fear of God, and deviates not from it;*

*And is absorbed in God-his worth is immeasurable'.*

(page 223)

*'My friend, the great ones of the world are sunk<sup>33</sup> as they have borne no fear;*

*'Those who have His grace are rowed across.'*

(page 636)

As will be evident from the above extracts, a few out of many on this themes of fear, the fear of God, - sensitiveness as to the supreme importance of the issues of good and evil-lies at the centre of the spiritual attitude, from which grows true moral conduct. Even the average intelligence can realize the implication of this aspect of the Guru's teaching through contemplating the conduct of the evil-doer, who is not self-searching, and thrusting aside the voice of conscience, is determined to persist in the course of iniquity.



**Ethical Determinism** : The belief which emerges from the World of Guru Nānak, lies between what may be called determinism and free will. Man's will is postulated to be free, inasmuch as on him is laid the responsibility of the good or evil actions issuing from him while acting under certain impulses which is a species of sin, or in emancipation from such and acting according to the prompting of a mind restrained and enlightened-man is at the same time making his own destiny. This destiny itself is nothing except a predisposition to good or evil, which may determine his 'emancipation' or his remaining 'bound by desire is to experience continuing transmigration which itself is suffering. Ultimately man's destiny lies in willing the control and transcendence of desire, or in allowing himself to be drawn more and more into it. This is obviously a statement of a law which makes for predetermination; yet such predetermination does not presuppose what is called fatalism or the helplessness of man before a congregation of factors which are destined for him before birth. Predetermination there is but it is man's own previous actions-actions of earlier existences-which have made the destiny he must undergo now; and further more, through a moral change in his nature, which Guru calls an act of 'grace' inasmuch as man's own effort is not adequate, to his emancipation, man may work off the consequences of his evil-doing. This element of 'grace', called by the Guru *prasāda* (Sanskrit) or *mehr* (Persian) or *nadar, nazar* (glance of loving-kindness-Arabic) or by several other names, is a mysterious factor, not dependent on man's will, but on the incalculable operation of Divine mercy and goodness. That there is in some individuals innate, almost primal evil, appears also to be implied by the Guru. To be predisposed to temptation and evil desire is such primal sin. On page 153, comparing the state of those whose minds are in accord in the boat, the Guru calls others who have not embarked, "those prevented from embarking under the curse of the Divine portal." Again, while expressing the anguish of his soul over the suffering of the people of India during Babar's invasion, the Guru ascribes

such suffering to the moral failing of the Indians. Such failing, Guru ascribes to an act of Divine wrath. "Those whom the Creator destines to forget Himself, He deprives of Goodness" (page 417). On the contrary, the prompting towards goodness is itself an act of grace, and is called 'supreme good luck' or 'lucky conjunction', and by numerous other expressions pointing in the same direction. A few texts will bring out various facets of the Guru's view of the inextricable inter-relationship between man's will (action) and his destiny. In the *Japuji*, man is exhorted, in an agricultural simile, to partake or what sows himself. In the same prayer towards the end, it is said : 'Each one's destiny is determined by his action', and 'by one's action is one placed near God or away from Him'.<sup>34</sup> The determination by actions is inescapable. 'Indelible is the reckoning on one's deeds (page 1213). 'One gets what is recorded from before birth : indelible is the reckoning of deeds' (page 1009), Obedience to God's will, that is predisposition to goodness and the spiritual life is itself determined, as the Guru says at the conclusion of the first stanza of the *Japuji*. In the *Japuji* itself in another context it is said. "The human incarnation<sup>35</sup> is the result of one's own deeds, while the door of emancipation is reached through Divine grace". Here, in the form of a spiritual aphorism is started the co-existence in human life of the factors of man's own deeds and mystery of Divine grace. "God alone makes union and separation; to man's share falls what is destined". (*Japuji*, stanza 29). 'Union is the attainment of emancipation from māyā or illusion. Life is not ruled entirely by human actions, which can be misguided, erring and egoistically motivated under the illusion of virtue, but ultimately by Grace which alone is the final arbiter of what is good and what falls short of it. But the statement of an the basis of man's destiny being ethical is overwhelming, so that man, while hoping for grace must never relax his striving in the path of goodness of which the transcendence of desire and beneficent action in the human world are the two vital constituents.

For the deterministic character of human actions, the Guru

has employed a number of telling figures. In one place, implying the continuing nature of deeds, so that despite man's blind complacency, they continue to influence his future, the Guru says : 'Good and evil deed's are seed-bags' (page 152). The universe is compared to a lake full of precious pearls. Like the fabled swans of Indian lore, the saints of God alone are destined to pick up those pearls from water. The common, worldly-minded man is like the stork, wallowing in mud, not aware of the pearls it is missing (page 685). The 'pearls' herein are God-consciousness and Enlightenment, which the worldly-minded person altogether misses. So, not the ordinary joys and sorrows of life, but the Supreme Bliss, which is what alone is worth striving for, would come to those who have striven in the way of God.

Taking up other figures of speech, evil tendencies are compared to 'chains round the neck' (page 595), to 'fetters on the legs' (page 1191) and to 'the hangman's noose', from whose fatal grip there is no escape" (page 1255).

About joy and sorrow in the commonly accepted sense, the Guru opening out to man the spiritual vision, commends indifference, transcendence of pleasure and equanimity in the face of suffering. The pursuit of Supreme Bliss, which is above, what the world can give or withhold is alone a worthy occupation, says the Guru.

*'Shold the wandering mind be fixed in the vision of  
Reality<sup>36</sup> and be dyed in truth and fear,  
it may then taste the supreme joy of Enlightenment, and  
never again hunger for the world.  
Nānak, suppress the desires of the mind,  
Seek union with God, all sorrow will then be gone.'*  
(page 21)

*'Sorrow and suffering may be overcome by man, through  
resting in God and shedding egoism.  
Sorrow is the poison-God's name the substance to  
transmute it into joy.  
This chemical substance may be pulverized on the stone  
of contentment, with hand of charity.*

*One constantly taking this elixir shall not suffer pains of  
dissolution,  
And in the end will spurn the terrors of death.'*

(page 1256)

Fulfilment comes only from absorption in God. In seeking  
the objects of desire, man is perpetually hungry and  
unsatisfied.

Speaking of himself as God's Minstrel (*dhāḍī* in Punjabi)  
the Guru symbolically delineates the wonderful experience of  
absorption in the Absolute wherein all desire is annulled :

*'The Lord listened to the Minstrel's prayer and  
summoned him inside the Mansion :*

*On beholding the Lord the Minstrel was relieved of all  
sorrow and desire, and forgot even to seek a boon:*

*At the touch of the Lord's feet all his desire were fulfilled.'*

(page 1097)

The state of the worldling, unmindful of the bliss which comes  
from absorption in God, is fraught with suffering, despite apparent  
affluence and indulgence in pleasures, in a mighty vision, says  
the Guru :

*'Those who have turned away from God,  
Meaningless in their life;*

*Neither in life nor hereafter is for them joy; like carts  
laden with ashes are they.*

*Separated from God, they remain without hope on union;  
at the door of Yama<sup>37</sup> they undergo great torment.'*

(page 1010)

In a deeply touching lyric, full of love and compassion for  
man in his blundering search after the fatal pleasures of life  
which bring torment in this world and spiritual death, the Guru  
compares him first to a black buck, full of lusty masculinity  
ignorantly nibbling at green shoots, unmindful of the snares lying  
hidden at his feet. Then the figure of the humming bee is  
employed, fitting from flower to flower for voluptuous pleasure.  
A few lines, relevant to the theme under discussion, are here  
quoted from this supremely great poem. Apostrophizing the buck,  
the Guru says :

*'The poisonous fruit taste sweet for a few days only; then will it begin to torment thee:*

*This fruit which has intoxicated thee, will then torment-  
without God will thou be in deep suffering*

*Pleasure is unstable like the stormy ocean; like flashing lightning.*

*None is thy protector except God-Him hast thou forgotten  
Believe Nānak, thou black buck; forget not that thy path  
in is the pate of death.'*

At the conclusion of this beautiful lyric occur the lines :

*'Those whose hearts are without God's Eternal name  
and His love, will in the end wail and cry bitterly,  
Saith Nānak truly: though God's Word will the long-  
separated ones<sup>38</sup> be united.'*

(page 432-39)

**The Conquest of Suffering :** As has been made clear in the foregoing pages, suffering and pleasure in the usual, physical sense have no significance in the larger vision of the human life which emerges from the Guru's teaching. The annulment of suffering and the attainment of Bliss or Supreme Joy, *mahāras* or *mahāsukh*, is the goal of human endeavour. The Guru, how ever unlike the recluses who were indifferent to the suffering of the world, has a keen consciousness of evil in the human world and of the suffering which tyrants and evil-minded person wilfully inflict on humanity. Hunger, he says in one place, is a source of great suffering; but to the man of God the greater suffering is separation from God. 'All suffering vanishes when one hungers for the Name Eternal' (page 9). Among the powers which man might covet, the Guru mentions : 'Were I to have the power to drink all sorrows like water'. This of course, may not be; so suffering he recognizes as inevitable.

In another place (page 142), enumerating the factors which may deflect the mind from absorption in God, he affirms;

*'Were the body to suffer in torment, and planets of evil  
were to surround me;*

*Were I to live under the terror of blood-thirsty tyrants-*

*were there to be no visible end to such a state-  
Still must I chant Thy praises, in ecstasy unending.'*

In the great poem voicing patriotic-moral indignation at the massacre and foul crime perpetuated by Babar's soldiery in the Punjab, the Guru is deeply sensitive to the suffering of the masses, and apostrophizing God, questions Him : 'In torment the people have wailed; didst Thou not feel pity for them?' The Indians are compared to a herd of kine, on whom, has swooped a ferocious tiger. But the Guru is a prophet, whose soul transcends the fact of pain and suffering, real as these are. Suffering is the result of man's own evil doing, his indifference to morality and humanity. Stern as the punishment falling on the people is, man must not lose sight of Eternal Justice. Let him understand they were of God, who determines all as is fit. Yet, running like a *leit-motif*, these lyrics on Babar reflect the Guru's consciousness of the suffering of man, of a colossal tragedy which has gripped a great nation. Thus, the finale of these songs is full of words burning with anguish. Says the Guru, after mentioning the orgy of lust and raping by Babar's soldiery, which he has castigated as 'weddings made by Satan':

*'Nānak, blood is the theme of the song for such a  
wedding; blood is also the saffron-paste to suit it.  
In this city of corpses, Nānak sings the praises of the  
Lord, and proclaims His law.....*

*The vesture of flesh shall be torn to shreds : India shall  
remember my word!'*

(page 722-23)

Along with these insights into the nature of suffering—namely, that it is something real in the world of men, where evil stalks, doing its destructive work transcend suffering, there is another attitude towards suffering also which one comes across in the Guru's teaching. This other attitude is essentially moral, as against the one in which suffering may be transcended by the soul, by merging itself in the Absolute called the Name or the Eternal (*satya*). This new attitude consists in the recognition that in the world of social relation, particularly that aspect thereof which

may be called political-organized power, generally used to impose on mankind the iniquitous will of a despot or of his gang-the man of God may have to suffer from such iniquity. Such suffering, however, instead of remaining merely individual and meaningless, must, by the man of God, be made meaningful, and creative-creative in the sense that by owning suffering, the man of God must help the good to prevail; must put up resistance to evil, even though passive, and induce in other the attitude to the modern man, though not to the medieval man in India. The saints and sages of India held either the purely individualists attitude of gaining personal merit, or thought only in terms of ritual actions of approved character. Political and such issues had never been thought of; resistance to tyranny was a concept which simply did not exist except perhaps on an individualistic basis, as the wrecking of personal vengeance. The attitude of mind which courts martyrdom was not quite familiar in those times. As a matter of fact, the term as far as the Indian people are concerned, gained currency only in the wake of the martyrdom suffered by the fifth and ninth Gurus of the Sikhs—Arjan Dev and Tegh Bahādur, and later by large number of those who followed Guru Gobind Singh. As a matter of fact, it was the Sikh teaching the meaning of morality so as to take it out of mere personal piety; and intimate relationship to embrace the operation of the conscience in relation to matters touching the widest social relationships.

To recur to the theme of what earlier was called the creative attitude to suffering. Guru Nānak's view of it was not ritual suffering by way of penance, which was familiar to India. It was, as just pointed out, suffering undergone with a view to resisting evil in obedience to an movement of the soul. In ancient times one hears of certain saints (*r̥sis*) undergoing self imposed penance to force some potentate to do something. This was in a sense a step towards martyrdom. As is seen in the pages of the *Holy Granth*, the saints Kabīr and Nāmdev were persecuted by the rulers of their day, probably, as supposed here tics. This again

was martyrdom. But the creative, comprehensive vision with a social, humanitarian significance was formulated only by Guru Nānak. Kabir too has a deep insight into the heroic, martyr character. Says he, in a hymn recorded on page 1150 of the *Holy Granth* :

*'The true hero is one who wages the struggle for the  
poor and the helpless.*

*He may be hacked from limb to limb, yet flees not the  
field;'*

(page 1150)

Speaking of the suffering borne in pursuit of some moral ideal, Guru Nānak says :

*'Listen, people of the world! Dying is not an evil, provided  
one knows how to die.*

*Blessed is the death of heroic men,  
if they meet it in an approved cause.'*

(page 579)

Again, recognizing the inevitability of suffering in life, the Guru inculcates in man the idea of bowing to the 'Divine Will'

*'Nānak, for man it is idle to ask for pleasure when pain  
comes :*

*Pleasure and pain are like robes which man must wear  
as they come.*

*Silence alone is commendable, where arguing can be of  
no avail.'*

(page 149)

Evil must ultimately be frustrated and defeated in a universe ruled over by a providence whose purposes are moral. Says the Guru; Nānak, falsehood must be destroyed; in the end Truth shall prevail (page 1283). The tyrants of the world have been destroyed, despite this that during their brief hour of authority they looked so formidable. God is already quoted from the *Vār Āsā*, may turn kings into insignificant blades of grass. In a hymn, recounting the nemesis falling on the tyrants mentioned in mythology, the Guru concludes about the arrogant Duryōdhana.

*'Duryodhana was ruined in dishonour;*

*He forgot God, the Creator;*

*He who persecutes God's saints must come to harm and*



*suffering.*

(page 225)

This theme finds repeated expression in the teaching of the Gurus succeeding Guru Nānak, and is part of the apocalyptic vision of The Sikh faith, inspired by the realization of the moral nature of the universe, sympathetic to the moral impulse in the human mind.

Allied to this attitude of bearing suffering with equanimity is faith in the ultimate approval of man's sacrifice by God in His path. This attitude is not the same as is expressed in the mythology current in India, which for the masses and no less for the intelligentsia is religion, according to which by Divine intervention the tyrant is always frustrated. As is well-known, mythology tells Rāvaṇa, Haṇḍākash (Hiraṇyakaśipu), Duryodhana, Kaṃsa and other tyrants being destroyed by miraculous intervention. Such a mythological treatment was not possible for the evils of the age to which the Guru brought his vision of the Divine Order. Not for the good man to wait in the calm confidence that evil will somehow be destroyed, but to undertake suffering with the clear realization that its meaning lay in some distant future to be determined by God. While knowing suffering to be inevitable, the man of God must fix soul on God, and thus transmute his suffering into peace. Says Guru Nānak, in the *Vār Āsā* : "Suffering is the medicine; pleasure the malady" (page 469). On page 21 occurs the affirmation : "To forget the Beloved<sup>39</sup> even for a moment is a malignant disease." Guru Arjan says in his composition of the Months, *Bārā-māh* : "All evil arise from indifference to God." Guru Arjan, the first of the holy Preceptors of the Sikh faith to embrace martyrdom, has expressed in a prophetic vision the spirit in which the man of God must bear suffering.

*I have taken shelter under the Transcendent Lord;  
blasts of hot air touch me not;*

*I am begirt around with Rāma's Arc<sup>40</sup>; Suffering penetrates  
not to me.*

(page 819)

This aspect of the theme of suffering finds expression at length and in its various facets in the teaching of the Sikh religion. This is a distinctive note heard in the expression of religious experience in India, which has been mainly individualistic, and has moreover turned a face of indifference to the existence of evil in the world of social relationship. To have extended the sphere of moral duty to this wide sphere has in it the same fundamental moral idealism as underlines the message of the *Gītā*, wherein too Arjuna is exhorted not to shirk the fight; for despite his personal distress at the unpleasant nature of the duty falling on him, it is harmful for the well-being of the community, for the hero, the man of virtue, to be indifferent where aggressive evil is to be resisted. Seeing the carnage made by Bābar, the Guru summed up the situation as "evil strutting in triumph." But it was tyranny beating down moral evil and cowardice. Hence the Guru's enunciation of the Divine Law which must ultimately be on the side of those who are moral.

**Moral Reason - the Sovereign Guide :** While at many places in the Guru's Word the world of human relations is glanced at and iniquity denounced, there is one whole composition, disquisitionary for the most part-the *Vār Āsā* whose theme may be defined as Moral Reason. In it, while there are passages of deep devotional and spiritual experience, such as the one about the fear of God guiding the universe towards its moral fulfillment, and the one beginning 'Holy are Thy continents and Thy universe', for the overwhelming part, this composition takes up with the flaming earnestness of the soul aroused to the height of prophetic vision the theme of true morality and its opposite the various forms of evil prevalent in the world of human relations. Not by the processes of ratiocination, but by the powerful movement of the soul which sees evil as a negation of the will of God and of the moral urge in man, the Guru blasts, so to speak-castigates-various forms of evil, arousing in man moral indignation and revolt against what has been so castigated. It is

from the vision born in the soul that the Guru pours out these judgements on iniquity. These are not the outpourings of a mind gloating over its own supposed superiority in denouncing others; it is not egoism speaking to condemn egoism in others. It is the God-inspired voice of justice, of the spiritual vision, of truth measuring human conduct against the Divine law of morality, and calling upon mankind to search its conscience. Opening with the worshipful homage to the Creator and expression of the soul's wonder at and awe of the Infinity of Divine Might, the Guru touches upon the theme of the worldling, who "blind of soul, has made waste of his life" Then he returns to the theme of the fear of God pervading the universes, already referred to. Then, again the evanescence and worthlessness of worldly glory. The theme of the greatness of devotion intervenes in beautiful poetic form. Then is defined true devotion as against mere external form of religion. Now begins the central portion of this mighty composition. Various kinds of superstitions, beliefs and mere forms are brought up for castigation. Egoism is the great disease of the spiritual life. This takes the form of spiritual arrogance, and self-righteousness, of disputations, scholastic learning; of barren infliction of penance on oneself. As against these, true devotion is commended.

The theme then is taken up of the prevalent iniquity among those wielding power. Rulers are actuated by avarice; the teachers of religion are mere seekers after the wherewithal, for which they perform unworthy antics. Follows then a vision of Divine grace and true devotion transcending the sorrows of life. Then is an exhortation towards the equality of human beings, as against the stratification of caste, followed by the affirmation of Divine justice to all men. In the modern age, says the Guru, man must follow the path of devotion and humility, as against the rituals sanctioned of old. There is also a castigation of the hypocritical clergy. Blind of soul, they make a show of piety, and "wield the knife to butcher humanity." Their "sacred thread" is a mere sham,

unrelated to the moral discipline. Agents of the enemies of their faith, they persecute the cow and the brāhmaṇa, whom they profess to venerate, to win the favour of their employers. "Cowdung which they worship will not take them across the ocean of the world", says the Guru in severe castigation of the extortion and hypocritical piety of these minions of foreign tyrants. To this end they also impose extortionate levies on pilgrims. Slaves they are to the foreigners whose religion they profess to condemn. Liars, they yet make elaborate show of ritual purity. Their charity is received from extortion and social thieving. They encourage various superstition like ritual impurity at birth to draw charity. Impure spiritually, they yet make a show of bathing at sacred spots. A voice is also raised against giving an inferior status to women, "the mother of mighty heroes." In the end, before the supplement appended by the second Guru, Guru Nānak sums up what is true piety: "One immersed in evil is ignominious One whose tongue utters not God's name and lusts after delicious viands, forgetful of God; the face of such a one is indeed fit to spit at."

This great composition, for its burning earnestness of moral idealism is as I have expressed elsewhere, like a flame of sulphur to burn away impurities. Some of this moral earnestness, this attitude of reverence for the sanctities of life, has passed into the tradition of the Sikh people, and may be seen, in however diluted a form now, to determine the general tenor of their social conduct.

As in numerous other place in the Guru's Word, in the *Vār Āsā* too, the sources of evil in the human mind—not only the obvious evils of anti-social tendencies like lechery, but the subtler evil such as hypocrisy, duplicity, rationalization of the lower nature; unsuspected evils like pride etc., —are all brought up for exposure, so that moral vision of man is aroused by a lightning flash, as it were.

***The Moral Anchor*** : The morally-directed personality must

possess, apart from acquiring the philosophic vision, or enlightenment which penetrates the veil of duality or ego-centredness, certain unmistakable qualities of conduct. Among these, charity of disposition has been given the prime place by the Guru. In one text it is said : "Sweetness and humility are the essence of all virtue."<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the good, religiously-minded person must never speak ill of others, never indulge in slander. "At all place, speak thou what is good, and participate in what is good' (page 766). The greatest of all conquests in the conquest of the self,<sup>42</sup> that is, one's egoism. In another context, a different insight is given : True victory lies in giving up the world' (page 1370).

Humility and forgiveness are other sovereign qualities commended by the Guru, in words alive with deep compassion and humanity. In numerous texts appear terms of self-abasement before the Creator, of the spirit of humility which is achieved as the reward of enlightenment. "One attains liberation only after attaining humility through love and devotion" (page 470). In a mighty invocation to the Creator, the Guru says :

*'The lowest of the low; The humblest of the humble;  
Nānak is with such; why need he envy those placed high?  
Lord, Thy mercy falls on the land where the humble are  
cherished.'*

(page 15)

In similar other expressions of utter humility, the Guru shows to mankind the way to banish egoism and arrogance. Reference has already been made to his vision of the ignoble end or arrogance and tyranny.

Guru Arjan, the fifth pontiff in the line of Guru, has given expression to the deep moral meaning of humility in a hymn in which we may hear the very voice of the soul.

*"Humility is my mace; self-effacement is spear I bear.  
These arms no evil-door can withstand*

(page 678)

Nānak, revealing the principle in operation in the universe writes:

"Lords of numerous citadels, Who have lived in the din and tumult of power;  
(Such) proud heads disdaining the sky have got dragged about in halters;

If man were to think of the painful consequences of pleasure, he would avoid indulgence.

Nānak, all sins are chains thrown around the neck.

These only good actions can cut asunder;

Such alone are man's friends and brethren.

The proud and arrogant get no honour in the next world, and are cast off as unbelievers."

(page 595)

### **Forgiveness and Compassion :**

'Whoever grasps forgiveness, vows purity, the noble way of life and contentment,  
Is rendered immune from all maladies and the malice of death.

(page 223)

"Those who abjured forgiveness, despite their vast cohorts were affected from the earth : Countless their numbers, had to enumerate.

He who knows the Master is liberated, never again to be bound. To know the True Word is to be approved in the celestial Mansion:

True joy comes from forgiveness and truthful living."

(page 937)

"Make forgiveness and patience thy milch-cow;  
Thus will the calf of thy soul be fed with the milk of spiritual bliss."

(page 1329)

"The Bull<sup>43</sup> of Righteousness is born of compassion :

Contentment holds in it place.

True wisdom is his who has this knowledge;

Enormous is the burden<sup>44</sup> under which this Bull stands."

(Japuji Stanza 16)

**Humanism** : Implicit in the moral idealism or what has been called Moral Reason is the attitude known as humanism. The essence of this is to give primacy to human well-being, spiritual and temporal, above ritual, ceremony, shibboleth and other arbitrary abstractions which encrusted social and religious tradition usually invents to continue over succeeding times the dominance of the past. Guru Nānak's Word was a great liberating influence for the people. By exposing the hollowness of ceremonial and ritual, he made a plea for exalting human well-being above hollow, fossilized customs, rendered obsolete since millennia. Part of this has already been illustrated from the summary statement of the theme of the *Vār Āsā* given above, and the Guru's dissociation from participation in ceremonials like the sacred thread, ritual bathing etc. Prayer, which in truth, should be devotion and worship, and absorption of the ego in the universal soul-is hollow and meaningless without spiritual participation in it. It is particularly castigated when it is all shame, a trap to catch the simple unwary people of the world by a show of piety, by means of a noly fraud. About such, the Guru, using telling symbols says :

*"Those who eat of human flesh recite namāz ;  
Those wielding the butcher's knife wear the sacred  
thread.,"*

(page 417)

Again, referring to the idea of ritual purity and impurity, the Guru stresses purity of the heart without which the mere show of external purity is a mockery and hypocrisy :

*"Cloth; is held impure if a drop of blood stains it :  
How then, is pure the conduct of those who drink human  
blood?"*

(page 140)

This, of course, is a castigation of tyranny and exploitation of mankind.

On untouchability, the Guru's spirit of humility whereby he identifies himself with the humblest has already been referred

to. In another context, the Guru calls evil thoughts cruelty, slander and violence the real untouchability : with such lodged in the mind, how may one be considered pure? Speaking again of the ritual purification of the kitchen for which orthodoxy has a particular ceremonial, the Guru calls falsehood the true impurity, in the face of which no ceremonial can cleanse and purify food. And so with other obvious immoral paradoxes of human conduct, most of which are castigated in the *Vār Āsā* and other compositions. A few texts may be cited here further to amplify this theme of the supreme value of moral conduct in determining purity of honour :

*'The age is turned knife, rulers butchers;  
righteousness has flown away on wings.  
The dark night of evil is spread;  
the moon of righteousness in nowhere visible'*  
(page 145)

*'Know all human beings to be repositories of Divine  
Light;  
Stop not to enquire about their caste'*  
(page 349)

*'Those forgetting the Lord are the truly low-caste.  
Nānak, the fallen are those who live without God.' (Ibid.)  
In the hereafter counts neither caste nor worldly power,  
What counts there is purity and not these!  
Nānak, they alone are holy whose deeds are entered as  
such in God's reckoning.'*  
(page 469)

*'Know ye this to be the measure of the Lord;  
Caste and birth are not there considered.  
Superiority of caste and worthiness are determined by  
man's deeds.'*  
(page 1330)

**The action Oriented Life :** From the forgoing discussion, it is evident that the basic principle involved in the teaching of the Sikh religion is the orientation of the human personality to wards pure, socially fruitful action.<sup>45</sup> For this the steps necessary are



enlightenment and restrain of passion. The personality so conditioned must wage a perpetual struggle<sup>46</sup> against evil not only within itself, but in the external world of human relation. In accordance with a theme reiterated at great length in the Word of Guru Nānak and his successors, the true hero is one who has waged battle against the lower human desires, and has, through bearing in his mind the fear of God, been rendered fearless. Such a one is free from the lure of personal desire, and fights against evil regardless of consequences. Transcendence of the desire for fruits, in the Guru's teaching as also in the ancient moral wisdom of India is the mark of the man whose soul is poised for heroism.

*"Nirvāṇa lies in leaving unto God the fruits of desire,  
One who leaves all in the hands of the Creator,  
is acceptable to God, be he householder or recluse."*

(page 1329)

*"Nānak, forget not God, for the rest, leave, everything to  
his will*

(page 1010)

*"One who breaks free of the lure of desire, alone will  
have union with God*

(page 877)

True heroism is envisioned as waging battle against the lower self. From victory over it arises the spirit to fight in the human world against evil. Such heroes are characterized as below.

*"Those who in the ambrosial early morning hour  
meditate on God and praise Him with minds  
concentrated.*

*Are the real lords among men, engaging in battle when  
the hour arrives....."*

(page 145)

The 'battle' spoken of herein is, of course, the battle against the prompting of the lower self.

The true hero is defined, among other place in the holy text, the *japuji*. In stanza 38, the formation of the spiritual ethical

character is visualized in the figure of moulding gold into ornaments thus :

*"With continence for blower; with poise the goldsmith.  
On the anvil of wisdom, with the tools of God's Word;  
With fear of God for bellows, in the fire of austere  
discipline;  
In the crucible of Divine Love-mould thou amrita.  
Thus is spiritual illumination moulded in the Divine  
mint."*

Leading on to this is the delineation of the sphere of action-action in the way of God :

*"Might is the expression of the Sphere of Action-  
Incomparable is the achievement of those who are of it.  
Its denizens are heroes of supreme might.  
Inspired by God-consciousness.  
In that sphere abide heroines like Sitā of surpassing praise  
and beauty indescribable,  
Such heroes suffer not morality<sup>47</sup> or guile<sup>48</sup> :  
God Himself abides in their souls.  
In that sphere abide devotee's worlds upon worlds.  
In everlasting Bliss, born of purity."*

(Japuji Stanza 37)

In these texts containing devotional poetry of supreme power, the deep inter-relationship between heroism and spiritual enlightenment is stated. To attain to this state, and not merely to abide in individualistic piety, is the aim and end of the spiritual-ethical discipline towards which the teaching of Guru Nānak and his successors lead the human personality.

**Spirit-born Heroism :** The emphasis of action as the consummation of the religious life has taken among the Sikh people certain highly distinctive forms in the course of their history, which when compared to the much longer periods during which Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam have influenced vast masses of humanity, is so brief. The Sikhs, under the influence, no doubt of the teachings of their Gurus however dimly though this may be understood by the common masses,

have turned their face away from individualism, and in their worship and social conduct act as a group, which in small units is called *saṅgat* (Congregation) while in its totality is *panth* (the Commonwealth). Shedding passivity where situation calling for determined action or resistance arise, they act as disciplined, organized force for mass action. What inspires them is the faith stemming from Guru Nānak himself, who prophesied nemesis on tyrants and presented a vision of God as the defender of right and chastizer of evil. In a telling phrase, Guru Nānak has worshipped God as *Asur-saṅghār*<sup>49</sup> - Destroyer of demons, i.e. evil-doers. This mode of apprehension of the Divine is in a way unique in the history of medieval religious thought in India. While in mythology, demons and tyrants were stated to have been destroyed by Divine vengeance, the entire conception of such action was remote, and hedged in by miracle and myth, so that its application to situations of real life was never presented clearly to the human mind. Moreover, this was the age of the Bhakti cult which emphasized tender devotion to the Divine person as Beloved, wrapping the entire conception of worship in soft, feminine erotic tones of great aesthetic appeal, but lulling the intelligence into a kind of dream away from reality and action. It was Guru Nānak who, with his prophetic vision of the stern realities operating on the human scene and the sovereignty of just retribution in the moral sphere, revived the ancient Indian moral concept of Divine Justice overtaking evil-doers by a compulsive necessity in the very nature of things. This moral vision has descended to the Sikh people as their spiritual heritage, and has always characterized their world-view, turning them into crusaders and martyrs for cause where issues of conscience are involved. There is no space here to go even briefly into the history of the Sikh people from the view-point of their crusading passion; but any one who does devote even a little attention to this theme will find that the Sikhs as a people are so easily moved by the call of conscience to action. Two examples will suffice. They did

not spare to chastize even the great Mahārāja Ranjit Singh for some lapse from morality. This would be unthinkable except among the Sikhs. Then, for several years around 1920 they waged a struggle involving heavy sacrifices including death and torture, against the corrupt guardians called *mahants*, of their shrines. This again is unique in Indian religious history. Such episodes and the general sensitiveness of Sikhs to the call of patriotism have their fountain in the spiritual-ethical teaching of the Guru, which has passed into race-character with the Sikhs.

It will be appropriate to conclude this essay with a few texts from the Sikh sacred writings which voice the Sikh moral vision and the urge for crusading action. Such texts are commonly repeated in Sikh prayer-gatherings, and their purport, if not the actual words, are familiar to most members of the community.

#### Faith in Divine Justice:

*'Against sickness and sorrow, from the dangers of land  
water, He gives protection in numerous ways :*

*May the foes' attacks be never so numerous, not one of  
these shall even gaze His servant.'* (Akāl Ustat)

*'Whosoever is protected by the friend, what can the foe  
accomplish against him ?*

*Not even his shadow will be touched;*

*all the efforts of his brutish foes shall go in vain.'*

(Bacitra Nāṭak)

(i) Below is a song of thanksgiving by Guru Arjan on deliverance from a Mughal tyrant Sulahi Khan. The imagery is expressive of faith in God who is the Chastizer of evil-doers.

*"Sulahi is rendered powerless to harm;*

*he has died wrapped in impurity.*

*The Lord, at one stroke of the axe smote his head; in a  
moment he was reduced to ashes.*

*He was destroyed, involved in his evil designs;*

*God who created him pushed him on his death.*

*The power of his arms and his supporters, his wealth-all  
shall cease to be; he has been wrested away from  
kith and kin.*

*Saith Nānak, I am a sacrifice to the Lord who made good the word of His servant."*

(ii) Guru Nānak, in a cosmic vision of the destruction of tyrants, enumerates Divine vengeance visiting each one of these in age after age of human history:

*'The beloved Lord created Kṛṣṇa in the form of the child-hero and gave him the strength to drag by the hair the tyrants Kaṃsa and Caṇḍūr;*

*He is the true Might, Destroyer of the power of intoxicated brutes*

*The Lord who made the universe, has kept all its affairs in His own power;*

*The universe is on His leash; He drags it withersoever.*

*He please;*

*The proud tyrant shall inevitably be destroyed : while the saint meditating on Him shall be merged in Him.'*

(page 606)

iv) An exalted vision of crusading idealism by Kabir :

*"The sky-resounding kettle-drum (of spiritual inspiration) is struck and the heart is pierced with the true passion (for righteousness);*

*The hero is engaged in battle, now is the time to fight unto the last;*

*He alone is the hero who fights to defend the humble and the helpless;*

*Who even though hacked from limb to limb, will not flee from the field."*

(page 1105)

(v) Guru Nānak, symbolizing the way of sacrifice, which is inevitable for one entering the spiritual-moral quest, says, "Shouldst thou cherish the desire to participate in the play of true love, place the head on the palm of thy hand; then alone must thou enter this quarter. Shouldst thou put thy foot forward on this path, hesitate not to give up thy head." (page 1412). The symbols employed herein point not to the way merely of negative renunciation, but to calling for the martyr's heroic resolve.

(vi) Guru Gobind Singh's flaming faith, while waging *dharmdyuddha* or Righteous War : (This is the pattern which Sikh fervour tends to assume when the passion for justice among the people is aroused. The references are to the devotional pieces of his composition)

*'He cherishes the humble protects the righteous and  
destroys evil-doers.'* (Akāl Ustat)

*'He consumes into flame suffering and evil, and crushes  
the hordes of the wicked in an instant* (Akāl Ustat)

*'Millions of demons such as Sumbha, Nisumbha, has He  
destroyed in an instant :*

*'Dhumra-Locana, Caṇḍa and Mahiṣāura has He defeated  
in a moment;*

*'Demons like Camara, Rana-Cichura, Raktachhana has  
He slaughtered at a stroke.*

*'With such a Master to protect him, why need this servant  
fear anything?' (Bacitra Nāṭak)*

### NOTES & REFERENCES

1. This occurs in the famous composition, *Vār Āsā*.

*Note:* All translations from Sikh Scriptural Writings occurring in this article are by the present writer.

2. From the prayer- chant, *Japuji*.

3. This term must be differentiated from *brāhmaṇa* which is the highest of the Aryan castes.

4. *Sac* or *Satya* (lit. 'Being') Which is a philosophical term, has been rendered here in its more intelligible connotation of 'Eternal'

5. The 'sun' here is spiritual light, which reveals reality, previously hidden by the darkness of illusion.

*Note:* All page-references, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *Guru Granth*, the Sikh scripture.

6. For Viṣṇu the original is Kant or Consort.

Viṣṇu is consort of Lakshmi, embodiment of world perf. He is the Eternal Principle.

7. The Divine is meant.

8. The egoist's attitude of duality is meant.

9. One whose vision is free from *mayā* or illusion.

10. Again, true knowledge or non-duality is meant here.
11. God is the only Reality, as against which the individual life and its concerns are illusions.
12. This is a symbol-term for the soul.
13. Violence, attachment, greed wrath.
14. Original *Om̐kār*.
15. Lit. the Name.
16. Original, *āsā* or *āsha*
17. Original -*turi* (*truyia*).
18. The passions.
19. Lit. hunger and thirst.
20. Worldly desire is meant.
21. Original, listening to the holy Word.
22. The extracts about the thread are taken from page 471 of the *Guru Granth*.
23. Yogis of various orders would (and still do) smear themselves with ashes, which they call *vibhūti* (wealth).
24. A *siddha*, such as the *yogis* with whom the Guru debated the spiritual-moral problems, is one who has attained perfection, *siddhi*.
25. Implies the individual beings.
26. This means ambrosia, and symbolizes here the principle of spirituality in man.
27. Yoga-practice, also called yoga-praxis is a technical term, referring to the elaborate technique of psychophysical discipline.
28. All through this essay, the tendency of the man of God is referred to as spiritual-moral; the implication being as will be noticed by the reader that the spiritual and the moral principles are inextricably fused and interdependent.
29. *Hukam razāi calanā*
30. page 1282
31. Guru Nānak's holy successors also assumed this name on ordination.
32. Lit. Light.
33. 'Sunk' and 'rowed across' find place in the concept of liberation, which is expressed through the figure of crossing the ocean of materiality or sin.

34. Incidentally, this makes man's emancipation a result of his own actions, and not of intercession by a Prophet, as in the Semitic faiths.
35. *Lit.* Vesture.
36. *Lit.* In its own place.
37. The God of Death and Retribution.
38. Refers to the selves undergoing transmigration and alienated from God.
39. God.
40. The mystic line drawn by Rāma to protect his consort Sitā from evil. Here used symbolically for the power of the soul to transcend evil.
41. Page 470. This rendering is by the late Professor Taje Singh,
42. From the *japuji*, itl. 'self-conquest is world-conquest'.
43. The mythical Bull supports the earth.
44. Refers to the evil on earth.
45. 'Everything else ranks below piety-higher than that is purity of conduct' (page 62).
46. Men of God are called 'heroes of supreme might' in *japuji* stanza 36.
47. Tansmigration.
48. Illusion or *māyā*.
49. Pages 59 and 224.



## IV THE FIVE SYMBOLS OF SIKHISM\*

J.P. Singh Uberoi

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### I THE STRUCTURAL METHOD

The custom of wearing long and unshorn hair (*kes*) is among the most cherished and distinctive signs of an individual's membership of the Sikh Panth, and it seems always to have been so. The explicit and-depilatory injunction was early established as one of the four major taboos (*Kuraht*) that are impressed upon the neophyte at the ceremony of initiation into Sikhism, and unshorn hair is one of the five symbols that every Sikh should wear on his person. Yet there exists hardly any systematic attempt in Sikh studies to explain and interpret the origin and significance of this custom.<sup>1</sup> As a religious system, Sikhism is anti-ritualistic in its doctrinal content and general tone so that a study of the few obligatory rites and ceremonies that are associated with it in its institutional or social aspect should be of considerable interest for their own sake. Moreover, if our investigation of the connexion between the nature of Sikhism as a whole and its five symbols, including the specific custom of being unshorn, were to be made in a comparative and empirical spirit and according to rules of method capable of universal application, we may expect that the solution of this particular problem would also illumine certain general problems of the sociology of religion, for example, regarding the nature of religious innovation and its

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institutionalization.

I am not myself able to adequately investigate the problem at present since I do not possess the requisite linguistic proficiency to study the original Punjabi sources and without enquiring into them at first hand one cannot proceed satisfactorily. The argument and interpretation presented in this paper will be based solely on the information available in English, and for my reliance on second-hand sources that are incomplete and liable to error, I make an apology in advance. I shall hope nevertheless that the sociological method or scheme of interpretation that I shall adopt might invoke some interest. For the results achieved, or capable of being achieved, in a line of enquiry depend not only on the evidence examined and its authenticity, but also on the method of analysis and interpretation followed.

The particular method adopted here, which may be called the structural method, implies that, for a proper theoretical understanding or explanation the ceremonial custom or rite in question must be viewed from two interrelated aspects. We should attempt to determine (1) its ideological and (2) its social function within a particular social system of groups and categories. The first aspect, which we may call explanation at the level of culturally-conditioned thought and belief, is a matter of examining the ceremony or rite as a condensed statement, the symbolic expression of certain characteristic cultural ideas and values. In the second aspect of our study we move to the level of institutionalized behaviour or social action, and seek to relate the rite and the social occasion of its performance to the wider social system of the group or category of persons who recognize the obligation to perform it. In neither case do we consider the particular rite in isolation but bearing in mind the context of the rites with which it is associated in reality, and at either level of analysis our understanding proceeds by seeking to relate the part of its large whole, the piece to the pattern. Only after these necessary steps have been accomplished in the context of particular culture and society, may we rightly proceed further to

compare the meaning and social functions of similar rites observed in two or more different cultures, or even of the same rite in a single culture at different historical periods.

Combining these two aspects or levels of thought and behaviour, which it is convenient to distinguish for analysis we may state the central assumption of our procedure in the form that all ceremonies and rites are expressive and affirmative in character, that is, they embody and communicate abstract meanings and values in concrete shape. The obligatory and oft-repeated social performance of a body of rites serves to give definitive expression and form to a people's collective life and ideas. It affirms to themselves and to others the structural coherence of their particular pattern of culture, thought and social organization as an ordered whole, and contributes to maintain and develop that pattern from generation to generation. These effects together constitute, according to our main theoretical assumption, the *raison d'être* of ritual behaviour and symbolic thought.

It will be apparent to anyone who has made the attempt that an investigation of the exact meaning and social function of a rite is a complex and difficult task. It is a process like that of ascertaining the grammar and syntax of a language, its structure as against its lexicon, which cannot be done by simple enquiry from native speaker or informant. For ritual is capable by its inner nature or encapsulating several abstract meanings and social references, and moreover these generally do not lie readily accessible at the conscious surface of life but require to be extracted, as it were, from the subconscious. It is therefore specially necessary in this field of study to avoid all easy inferences from intuition or deductive reasoning and to adhere to explicitly formulated rules of method.

## II. SYMBOLS, SECTS AND INITIATIONS

The cultural association of male hair, especially long hair, with magical or sacred ideas is known from many parts of the world. It is well recognized in general terms to be a symbol of

manliness, virility, honour, power, aggression and so on. For example, in very early Europe, the Achaeans, who conquered Greece, customarily wore their hair long and wild. The Semitic story of Samson and Delilah as told in the Old Testament well illustrates the virtue of remaining unshorn. We can readily locate many similar examples in classical Hinduism.\* The Institutes of Manu specify that : "Even should a man be in wrath, let him never seize another by the hair. When a *brāhmaṇa* commits an offence for which the members of other castes are liable to death, let his hair be shaved off as sufficient punishment."

We should, however, be careful to remember that, like all sacred or tabooed objects, long hair can also equally carry the opposite connotation. It can be regarded, especially when unkempt, as signifying something unclean, dangerous or abandoned. We must thus refer, according to the rules or our method, to the actual context and situation in order to determine which of these two elements is predominant in a particular case.

That the precise physical state of the hair is always relevant to its symbolic meaning, but is never itself the deciding factor, can be made clear from the example of the Chinese pigtail, which superficially resembles the Hindu *Śikhā* (scalp-lock) in appearance. The Manchus, a foreign dynasty, in fact first instituted the pigtail among the Chinese in A.D. 1644 as a sign of their subjection. It later became accepted as a characteristic Mandarin custom, even as a sign of honour. In the mid nineteenth century Sun Yat-sen's movement and others sought to dispose of it, remembering its original significance. The Taipings did so by wearing all their head hair long and so became known as the "long-haired rebels", whereas the twentieth century revolutionaries proceeded to cut all their hair short literally

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\* Certain sculptures from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro portray men with long and well-combed hair. The R̥gveda (X. 136) describes an ascetic sage (*muni*) who is called 'long-haired' (*kesin*). The old Pali Texts mention a class of peipatetic ascetics, with long, unshorn and matted hair, called *jattilas*. -L.M. Joshi.

throwing the pigtail away. The complete contrast between these two outcomes of a single impulse is not without interest for our study.

In Sikhism the injunction to remain unshorn is expressly associated with the ceremony of initiation, and it is in that context that we must primarily explain it. Now very initiation rite evidently possesses the nature of an investiture or conferment, since through it some new status with its consequent rights and obligation is conferred symbolically upon the neophyte and he or she enters on a new mode of existence. But every initiation rite necessarily also contains the somewhat less obvious element of renunciation or divestiture, whereby the neophyte symbolically discards or has taken away from him attributes of his old status and mode of existence. One must ritually first abandon the previous course or phase of social existence in order to properly enter the new. Admittedly, the positive element of investiture or conferment of renunciation or divestiture is always present to some degree. This negative elements may even be uppermost in certain cases, for example, in initiation to monkhood.

I want now to draw attention to a class of initiation rites of this latter kind that were widely prevalent in the Punjab at the time when Sikhism took its origin. These were the rites of renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) through which an individual obtained entrance to one or other of the medieval mendicant orders (*saṁnyāsis*, etc.) It is my contention that an examination of this class of rites with the details of the Sikh initiation rites borne in mind, shows a remarkable relation of structural inversion to exist between the two. I want to suggest that, in terms of the symbolic language and ritual idiom of the times, at least one cultural meaning of the Sikh initiation rite was that it stood as the antithesis of the rites of Hindu renunciation.

A *saṁnyāsi* is a person who, having passed through the first three statuses (*āśramas*) of Brahmanical Hinduism, renounces the world and is cared for by others. It may perhaps be that the *saṁnyāsi* religious orders were older than the Brahmanical

institution of *saṃnyāsi*, the fourth and last stage of life. At any rate, the orders seem to have been open to entry by the individual person of almost any physical age. The *saṃnyāsi* orders had decayed significantly during the post-Buddhist period and than split into sub-orders with heterodox creeds. They were reformed by Śaṅkarārya, whose four disciples instituted for *maths* (orders). that later developed into numerous *pādas* (sub—order). Each sub-order was said to have two sections, one celibate and mendicant, the other not. All sections, one celibate and mendicant, the other not. All *saṃnyāsis* were further graded according to four degrees of increasing sanctity (*kuṭīcaka bahūdaka, haṃsa paramahaṃsa*).

The *saṃnyāsi* initiation rites was and continues to be essentially as follows.<sup>2</sup> The candidate intending to attain renunciation first goes on a pilgrimage to find a *guru*, who should be a *brāhmana*, and the later satisfies himself as to his fitness, and proceeds to initiate him. The neophyte commences with the *srāddha* (obsequies) to his ancestors to fulfil his obligations to them. He next performs the sacrificial act, *havana*, and gives away whatever he possesses, severing all connexion with the world. His beard, moustaches and head are entirely shaved (*muṇḍana*), retaining only the scalp-lock (*Śikhā*) and the sacred thread is put aside. He then performs the *ātma-srāddha* or his own death rites. (An initiated *saṃnyāsi* is thus counted as socially deceased, and when he dies is not cremated but buried in a sitting posture without ceremony). The scalp-lock is now cut off, and the neophyte enters the river or other water with it, and the sacred thread in hand, and throws both away, resolving "I am no one's, and no one is mine." On emerging from the water he starts naked for the north but the *guru* stops him and gives him a loin-cloth (*kopin*), staff (*daṇḍa*) and water vessel (*jalapātra*) kept out of the neophyte's personal property. Finally, the *guru* gives him the *mantra* (spiritual formula) in secret, and admits him to a particular *math* (order), *sampradāya* etc.<sup>3</sup>

The initiation rite of the Jogi order, which was also widespread

in medieval Punjab, is very similar thing. According to the Punjab census Reports, 1912, *Jogi* is a corruption of *yogi*, a term applied originally to *saṁnyāsi* well advanced in the practice of *yogābhyāsa*. "The *Jogis* are really a branch of *saṁnyāss*, the order having been founded by Guru Machandar (Matsyendra) Nāth and Gorakh Nāth *saṁnyāsi* who were devoted to the practice of yoga and possessed great supernatural power. The followers of Guru Gorakh Nāth are absorbed more in the yoga practices than in the study of the *Vedas* and other religious literature, but between a real good *jogi* and a *Yogi-saṁnyāsi*, there is not much difference, except perhaps that the former wears the *mudrā* (rings) in his ears. The *Jogis* worship Bhairon, the most fearful form of Śiva"<sup>4</sup> Their main subdivisions are stated to be the *Darśani* or *Kanphaṭā* ("Split-eared"), known as Nāths, who were the *mudrā* (ear-rings), and the *aughads*, who do not.

In *Jogi* initiation, the neophyte (*celā*) is first made to fast for two two or three days. A knife is then driven into the earth,<sup>5</sup> and the candidate vows by it not to (1) engage in trade, (2) take employment, (3) keep dangerous weapons (4) become angry when abused, and (5) marry. He must also scrupulously, protect his ears, from "a *jogi* whose ears were cut used to be buried alive but is now only excommunicated." The neophyte's scalp-lock is removed by the *guru*, and he is shaved by a barber; his sacred thread is also removed. He bathes and is smeared with ashes, then given ochre clothes to wear, including the *kafni* (shroud). The *guru-mantra* is communicated secretly, and the candidate is now a probationer (*aughad*). After several month's probation his ears are pierced and ear-rings inserted by the *guru* or an adept, who is entitled to an offering of one-and-a-quarter rupee. "The *celā*, hitherto an *aughad*, now becomes a *nāth*, certain set phrases (not *mantras*) being recited."<sup>6</sup>

After initiation, a *Jogi* may either remain a celibate and ascetic mendicant (*naṅgā*, *nāgā*, *nādi*, *nihaṅg*, or *kanphaṭā*), living on alms; or he may relapse and become a secular *Jogi* (called *bindi-nāgi*, *sanyogi*, *gharbāri*, or *grihasti*, having property and spouse.)

A *Jogi* usually joins one or other of the various *panths* or "doors" (sub-orders), whose traditional number was twelve.

I mention finally the initiation rites of the *Dādupanthi* order, stated to have been founded by Dādu, a Gaud brāhmaṇa who died in A.D. 1703.<sup>7</sup> In this rite the *guru* in the presence of all the *sādhus* shave off the neophyte's scalp-lock and cover his head with a skullcap (*kapāli*) like one which Dādu wore. He dons ochre clothes and is taught the *guru-mantra*, "which he must not reveal"<sup>8</sup> The rite concludes with the distribution of sweets.

### III THE SIKH INITIATION AND ITS FIVE SYMBOLS

In my view there can be little doubt that the anti-depilatory taboo (*kuraht*) of the Sikh initiation rite is to be understood as a specific inversions in symbolic terms of the custom of total depilation enjoined by the *jogi*, *saṁnyāsi* etc. initiations. The elements of symbolic inversion, as I see it is in fact much more pervasive, but it has been entirely overlooked before owing to the prevalence, among students of religion, of the scholarly method of endlessly adducing parallels and similarities to the neglect of significant relations of contrast, counterpoint, inversion and opposition.<sup>9</sup> In contradistinction to the *Jogi* and *saṁnyāsi* ritual of nakedness or smearing oneself with ashes, the Sikh neophyte is made to come tidily clothed to the ceremony. The ear-rings affected by the *Jogis* are specifically forbidden to him.<sup>10</sup> Instead of requiring the *saṁnyāsi*'s resolve, "I am no one's, and no one is mine," the Sikh rite, emphasizing a new birth, requires the neophyte to affirm that his father is Guru Gobind Singh and his mother Mātā Sāhib Kaur, and that he was born in Kesgarh and lives in Anandpur. Even more significantly perhaps the initiator, instead of being the individual *guru*, is a collective group, the Five Loved Ones, composed of any five good Sikhs. Instead of the *guru-mantra* being communicated secretly to the neophyte, as with the *saṁnyāsi*, *jogies* and *Dādupanthis* the Sikh Guru's word must be spoken loud and clear by the initiator. Finally, in contrast to the *jogi*'s vow never to touch weapons, the Sikh neophyte is invested ritually with the *kirpān* (sword) as one



of the *five k's* that he must always wear thereafter.

I think we may safely say that the Sikh initiation rite contains a marked theme of inversion in relation to the rites of social renunciation established by the medieval mendicant orders that preceded Sikhism. Like them Sikhism was instituted as a religious brotherhood open to all who sought salvation, but its spiritual and social aims were in direct contrast to what theirs had been. Whereas they had sought individual renunciation at the price, as their rites signify, of social death, the Sikh community was to affirm the normal social world as itself the battleground of freedom. That is why in my opinion, its initiation rite makes the positive theme of investiture prevail wholly over the negative theme of divestiture, and taking certain widely established customs of renunciation, emphatically inverts them. The meaning of being unshorn in particular, is thus constituted by the "negation of the negation" : it signifies the permanent renunciation of renunciation.

This hypothesis, however, is not complete; it requires a further consideration regarding the *five k's*. We have so far concentrated our attention on the initiation rite itself and attempted to understand the meaning of *kes* in that context, but the five symbols of Sikhism are worn for life. Now, following initiation, the *saṃnyāsi* custom is to either wear all their hair or shave it all. The *jaṭ ādhārī jogies* follow the former course though among all *jogis* the signification of renunciation seems to be borne primarily by their pierced ears and ear-rings. The important order of *bairāgis* also keep long hair,<sup>11</sup> whereas the *Uttarāḍhi Dādupanthis* shave the head, beard and moustache.<sup>12</sup> The *Rasul Shāhis*, a Muslim order founded in the eighteenth century, also shave completely the head, moustaches and eyebrows.<sup>13</sup> In all instances where long hair is worn, it is worn as matted hair (*jaṭā*), frequently dressed in ashes. According to Sikh custom, on the other hand unshorn hair (*kes*) is invariably associated with the comb (*kaṅgā*), the second of the *five k's* which performs the function of constraining the hair and

imparting an orderly arrangement to it. This meaning is made even clearer by the custom of the Sikh turban. The *kes* and the *kaṅgā* thus form a unitary pair of symbols, each evoking the meaning of the other, and their mutual association explains the full meaning of *kes* as distinct from *jaṭā*. The *jaṭā*, like the shaven head and pierced ears, symbolizes the renunciation of social citizenship; *kes* and *kaṅgā* symbolize its orderly assumption.

The *kirpāṇ* (sword) and the *kaḍā* (steel bracelet) similarly constitute another pair of symbols, neither of which can be properly understood in isolation. Without going into the evidence I merely state that in my view the steel bracelet imparts the same orderly control over the sword which the comb does over the hair. The *kirpāṇ*, in its conjoint meaning with the *kaḍā*, is a sword ritually constrained and thus made into the mark of the every citizen's honour, not only of the soldier's vocation. Finally the *kachā*, a loin and a thigh garment, the last of the *five k's* is also to be understood as an agent of constraint like the comb and the bracelet, though the subject of its control is not overtly stated. Obviously, it is a sartorial symbol signifying manly reserve in commitment to the procreative world as against renouncing it altogether.

In case it might be objected that I am merely profaning the mystery in advancing the last hypothesis; I hasten to quote Guru Gobind Singh himself on the subject :

"Ajmer Chand inquired what the marks of the Guru's Sikhs were, that is, how they could be recognized. The Guru replied, My Sikhs shall be in their natural form, that is, without the loss of their hair or foreskin, in opposition to ordinances of the Hindu and the Muhammadans."<sup>14</sup>

We can now formulate the proposition that the primary meaning of the five symbols, when they are taken together, lies in the ritual conjunction of two opposed forces or aspects. The unshorn hair, the sword and the implicit uncircumcised male organ express the first aspect. They are assertive of forceful human potentialities that are of themselves amoral, even dangerous,

powers. The comb, the steel bracelet and the lion and thigh breeches express the second aspect, that of moral constraint and discrimination. The combination of the two aspects is elaborated in the form of three pairs of polar opposites (*kaṅgā/kes; kaḍā/kirpān; kachā/* uncircumcised member), thus generating, with one term left unstated, the five Sikh symbols. The aspect of assertion and the aspect of constrain combine to produce what we may call for want of a better word the spirit of affirmation, characteristic of Sikhism.

#### IV HINDUISM AND SIKHISM

So much then for the structural explanation of cultural meaning. We must now turn, although very briefly and simply, to the second level of analysis required by our method, and consider the wider social context of Sikhism's origin and growth. I do not here give all the evidence or make every qualification but state the problem in broad and general terms as follows. The Hindu system of social relations called caste, using that term to include *varṇa* as well as *jāti*, is, in fact, only the half of Hinduism. The whole Hindu *dharma* is described by the term *varṇāśramadharma*, that is, caste as well as the institution of the four stages (*āśramas*) of individual life. If sociologists have hitherto concentrated on the institution of caste to the exclusion of the latter institution, I can not claim to understand their reasons. For the social system of caste was always surrounded in reality by a penumbral region, as it were, of non-caste, whose principles abrogated those of caste and birth, and the fourth *āśrama* (*saṃnyāsa*) constituted a door through which the individual was recommended to pass from the world of caste to that of its denial. The mutual relation of the two world, and I have no doubt that was mutual, is of the greatest significance to a full understanding of either.<sup>15</sup> The system of local caste groups, predetermined by birth on the one hand, and the system of voluntaristic cult association or orders and sects, on the other cut across one another, forming the essential warp and woof of

Hinduism. The third structural feature, kingship, necessary to uphold *varṇāśramadharma*, possessed its own relations with the two contrasting worlds of the *bhāhmaṇa* and the *saṃnyāsi*. Thus the total ideological and social structure of the medieval Hindu world, including its political institution, rested upon a tripartite division and a system of interrelations among the three world symbolized by the king, the *brāhmaṇa* and the *saṃnyāsi* formed the three sides of the medieval triangle. The same total structure can perhaps be seen in Islamic civilization of the period in the division and interrelations among the three spheres of *hukumat*, *shar'iat* and *tariqat* or *haqiqat*. These are all problems for future investigation, when broken down into suitable units for study.

An order like the *Aghorpanthi Jogis*, who appear to have smeared themselves with excrement, drunk out of human skull and occasionally dug up the body of a newly-buried child to eat it "thus carrying out the principle that nothing is common or unclean to its extreme logical conclusion,"<sup>16</sup> evidently constituted the truly living shadow of caste orthodoxy. The theme of antinomian protest could hardly be carried further (unless it was by the *Vāma-mārgis* who added sexual promiscuity to the list!). Yet it could be reliably said of other *jogi* sub-orders that "in the Simla hills the *jogis* were original mendicants, but have now become house-holders," and that the secular *jogis*, called *saṃyogis*, "in parts of the Punjab form a true caste."<sup>17</sup> We can resolve this seeming contradiction only if we regard both these *jogi* conditions as forming the different stages or phases of a single cycle of development. According to this view, we should say that any particular order or sub-order that once renounced caste with all its social rights and duties and walked out into the ascetic wilderness through the front door of *saṃnyāsa*, could later become disheartened or lose the point of its protest, and even end by seeking to re-enter the house of caste through the backdoor. Of course, as a particular order or section fell back, so to speak, from the frontier of asceticism and abandoned its non-procreative, propertyless, and occupationless existence, its

function within the total system of *varṇāśramadharmā* would be fulfilled by some other order or section. Since the ascetic or protestant impulse itself remained a constant feature during its ascetic period, an order or sub-order may occupy one or the other of two positions, or pass through them both successively. It may either adopt a theory and practice completely opposed to those of caste, like the *Aghorpanthis* and *Vāmā-mārgis* and be, for that reason, regarded as heterodox and esoteric; or it might remain within the pale, and link itself to the caste system through the normal sectarian affiliations of caste people. A "heterodox" or antinomian sect, we should say, is one opposed to caste as its living shadow; an "orthodox" is complementary to the caste system, its other half within Hinduism.

I would not say that all historically known orders of renunciation, in fact, passed through these various stages of development, but I maintain that we must construct some such analytical scheme of their typical life-history with reference primarily to their origin, function and direction of movement in relation to the caste system. For that would enable us to classify the vast number of known orders and sub-orders into a limited number of sociological types, and obviate many difficulties in our study of them. In particular, until we can fully understand the development cycle of medieval mendicant orders we cannot place the political phenomena of the "fighting *jogi*" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the contemporaneous militant struggles of the *Roshanīya* sect,<sup>19</sup> the *Satnāmi* Revolt of 1675, or plunder of Dacca in 1763 by *saṁnyāsis*, etc, in their proper perspective. The analytical paradigm proposed must account under one and the same theory for cases or phases of political quietism as well as of political activism and conflict.

As a social movement early Sikhism no doubt possessed many features in common with other religious brotherhoods of a certain type. If Sikhism as a whole nevertheless broke free from the convoluted cycle of caste versus non-caste that overtook other protestant or antinomian brotherhoods, to what cause or cause

did it won its freedom? It is true that Sikhism as we noted earlier, barred the door of asceticism and so did not lose itself in the esoteric wilderness, but we have also to explain why it did not return, as so many others did to the citadel of caste. The new departure of Sikhism, in my interpretation, was that it set out to annihilate the categorical partitions, intellectual and social, of the medieval world. It rejected the opposition of the common citizen or householder versus the renouncer, and of the ruler versus these two, refusing to acknowledge them as separate and distinct modes of existence. It acknowledged the powers of the three spheres of *rājya*, *saṃnyāsa* and *gṛhastha*, but sought to invest their virtues conjointly in a single body of faith and conduct.

The social function of the Sikh initiation rite is, I think, precisely this : to affirm the characteristic rights and responsibilities of the three spheres as equally valid and to invest them as a undivided unit in the neophyte. The new Sikh, therefore, takes no *jogis* vow to renounce his procreative power and never marry; instead he done the *kacha* of continence. Instead of vowing like the *jogi* never to touch weapon or take other employment or engage in trade, every occupation is henceforth open to him, including that of soldiering, householdership or political command. The only thing he is asked to abjure is the degrading practice of sporting the begging bowl. The single key of the renunciation of renunciation was thus charged to unlock all dividing doors in the mansion of medievalism. Whether it succeeded, and to what extent, in doing so, is another matter.

The structural method of analysis and interpretation, of which I have attempted to provide an example, shows us what we can establish a definite connexion between the five symbols of Sikhism and its whole nature.

In my previous pairing of symbols and the assumption of an unstated term be accepted, then the five symbols of Sikhism may be said to signify in their respective pairs the virtues of *saṃnyāsa-yoga* (*kes* and *kaṅgā*), *gṛhastha-yoga* (*kachā*) and the

uncircumcised state) and *rājya-yoga* (*kirpān* and *kaḍā*). As the authenticating sign and seal of Sikhism, the five *k's* together affirm the unity of man's estate as being all of piece : this we may take to be the final meaning and function of remaining forever unshorn in the world. Our analysis would also lead to the conclusion that total human emancipation of religious man, and not any ideal of a synthesis or reconciliation of Hinduism and Islam, was the faith and endeavor of Sikhism from its inception. The institutionalization of that endeavour surely marked the opening of the modern period of history in the Punjab.

### NOTES & REFERENCES

1. A noteworthy exception is S. Kapur Singh, *Parāsharprasna : The Baisākhī of Guru Gobind Singh* (Jullundur : Hind Publishers, 1959), especially chs. 4 and 5.
2. The material presented in the succeeding pages is derived from a *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (based on the Census Reports for the Punjab, 1883 and 1892), compiled by H.A. Rose, 3 vols. (Lahore : Samuel T. Weston at Civil and military Gazette Press, 1911 and 1914). This work is referred to hereinafter as *Punjab Tribes and Caste*.
3. *Punjab Tribes and Caste*, III, 358.
4. P. Hari Kishen Kaur (*Punjab Census Report, 1892*, quoted in *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, III, 361).
5. The *Jogis* hold the earth and everything made of it in great respect. "The earthen carpet, the earthen pitcher, the earthen pillar and the earthen roof," is a saying that describes their life. Like the *saṁnyāsis*, *jogis* and buried in the earth and not cremated.
6. *Punjab Tribes Castes*, II, 400.
7. Ibid., II, 215, where it is also said that other accounts make Dādū contemporary of Dārā Shikoh, and still others with Guru Gobind Singh. The *Gurbilās* gives an interesting story about Guru Gobind Singh's meeting with a Dādūpanthi : see Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khālsā*, II (Calcutta : A. Mukherjee & Co., 1947, repr. 1962). 94-5.
8. *Punjab Tribes and Caste*, II, 216.

9. This neglect is apparent, for example, in the work of A. Van Gennep, the French sociologist, *Les rites de passage*, 1908, See English transl. by Vizedom & Caffee, *The Rites of Passage* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960) page 97.  
The same method is followed by S. Kapur Singh, *Parasharprasna : The Baisāki of Guru Gobind Singh* (Jullundur : Hind Publishers, 1959), chs. 5 & 7.)
10. Teja Singh, *Sikhism, Its Ideals and Institutions* (Calcutta : Longmans, Green & Co. 1938), p. 113.
11. *Punjab Tribes and Castes*, II, 36.
12. Ibid. II 216.
13. Ibid. III, 324.
14. M.A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1909).
15. Caste ( and particularly the position of brāhmaṇas) was stated by Max Weber to be "the fundamental institution of Hinduism" : See H.H. Gerth & Co. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber, Essays in Sociology* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), p. 396.  
This purely one-sided view is especially curious in the German sociologist since he was the first to make use (in 1916) of the "partly excellent scientific Census Reports" (Ibid., p. 397) which also form the basis of *Punjab Tribes and Castes* and of the present paper.
16. *Punjab Tribes and Caste*, II, 404.
17. Ibid., II, 399<sub>n</sub>, 409.



## V

# SIKHISM AMONG WORLD RELIGIONS

Sohan Singh

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### INTRODUCTORY

This essay is an attempt to place Sikhism in the panorama of world religions. The approach in this study is that of religious phenomenology, that is to say, it eschews value judgements. Value judgements only too readily degenerate into showing up the blemishes of other religions as against the bright spots of your own religion. Ultimately, of course, it comes to exposing the blemishes of your own religion. Apart from that, such a thing is against the principles of the very religion which forms the subject of our study.

Religion arises within human experience. In religious experience man realizes his utter creatureliness, he realizes that his earthy dwelling is a prison-house of finitude. But this realization is supplemented by the uplifting realization that it is possible for him to metamorphose himself out of this creatureliness, that there is a way out of this prison-house into psychic spaces which are as limitless as they are inviting. This much seems to be the common element in all religions; beyond that each religion has its own flavour.

Religions range over a wide gamut, from animistic faiths to rarefied mysticism, and no human society has been known to be without a religion. In the short space available to us, we must, therefore, limit the reach of our scanning and in a study which has been undertaken solely for illuminating Sikhism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. These are all higher religions in the sense that they purport to have a message for mankind-as

a whole, and not for any particular society or culture or race. Any man or group of men, can own any of these five religions and be accepted by his co-religionists, irrespective of his national or social background.

### THE REALITY FOR GOD

As mentioned above, religion starts with the realization by man of his creatureliness. Its *Nirvāṇa* is such a reality and *Nirvāṇa* is not non-being, for otherwise the Buddha, logical and rationalist that he pre-eminently was, would have recommended suicide as the surest way out of the *dukkha* or helplessness of man into the Liberation or *Nirvāṇa*. Of course, in accordance with Buddhist doctrine, suicide would not end the cycle of births and deaths, which is the source of all *dukkha* but this doctrine itself can be interpreted as a refusal to equate the ending of creatureliness with the cessation of life. The Buddha, as is well-known, discouraged speculation of the positive aspect of *Nirvāṇa*, because he wanted his fellowmen to concern themselves more with the ending of this creaturely state than with its metaphysics. For other religions the creatureliness or the finitude of man is realized only in the moment of man's apprehension of the Reality at once infinite is the more determinative aspect of what is known as religious experience. That this way of regarding man's religious situation has a compelling hold on him is shown by the fact that even the Buddha's followers of the Mahāyāna persuasion found it necessary to posit and abstract Buddhahood, indistinguishable from the God of other religious, Sikhism shares this view of the primary Reality or God with Hinduism, and most of all, with the Semitic religions- Christianity and Islam.

However, this unity of outlook on the part of the four religions is not all of one grey. For the Semitic religions the non-creaturely Reality is a Person, just as man is a person, though, of course, without man's limitations. And just as man as a person is related to other persons' so is the Supreme Person related to other person. And as there is no person equal to Him, He is related to

all other persons as their Lord. This universe is the creation of the Lord; if it were not, He would not fulfil the religious need of a being without a trace of creatureliness. This Supreme and Creator Lord is God. The relationship between God and man in Christianity is primarily of God's Love to man, in Islam it is of man's submission to God or Allah.

In the dominant system of Hindu thought the Supreme Reality is impersonal. It is impersonal because there can be no personality untainted with finitude, and an Infinite Person is a contradiction in terms. All qualities, even the quality of being Creator are indications of finitude, hence, the Supreme Reality, called *brahman*, is beyond qualities. He is *nirguṇa*. The only attributes that do not mar the infiniteness of *brahman* are that of reality, consciousness and bliss, So that *brahman* is *saccidānanda*, the Being who is Real and is of the nature of Consciousness and Bliss.

This kind of reality, indescribable as it is, comes tantalizingly close to the Buddhist Nirvāṇa, which too, is indescribable. No wonder, Śaṅkara, the greatest exponent of the *nirguṇa brahman*, was sometimes dubbed a Buddhist. And just as the early Buddhist refusal to describe Nirvāṇa left a corner in the human soul invitingly empty, so did the *nirguṇa brahman* or Absolute of the Vedāntists leave the religious craving in man unfulfilled. And the very Vedāntist who in the enthusiasm of their philosophy denied any reality but that of the qualityless *brahman* or Absolute turned with devotion and even fervour to a personal God in their religious moments. This is by and large, the position of Indian religions, and Sikhism is no exception. For them God exists in two modes—in the *nirguṇa* mode as the supreme impersonal Reality, as consciousness and bliss, and in the *saguṇa* mode as personal God who is the Creator and to whom men turn for prayer and succour in order to transcend their own creaturely state.

Why did the Indian mind think it necessary to posit a God beyond "the God", as Tillich would say? To understand this we

must look at the transition of religious consciousness of mankind from polytheism to monotheism or monism. This transition has taken place in more than one way. Two of these are relevant to our purpose. We may call them the Semitic way and the Āryan way. It is known that though the early man believed in many gods, a tribe had its most favourite god, with whom it was particularly identified. The wars between tribes were, therefore, the wars between the gods, and the supreme god was the whose tribe came out victorious over other tribes, the tribes of other gods. Without going into details, it may be said that the one God of the Semitic people first emerged from the conflict of tribes, and was later elevated to a moral God through experience of intra-tribal social conflict. The Āryans went through a different type of experience-their tribes were fighting in India the indigenous tribes in the country, more or less conscious of their oneness as against the *Dasyus*. Their gods, therefore, formed a family of gods, where some time one god was the family head and sometimes another. Again, through the device of *varṇa* or the caste system, the Āryans bypassed internal social conflict. They had, therefore, overcome man's adversary in man, but they had not overcome man's adversary in nature. Whatever good things nature gives to man they are in time taken away; everything is subject to decay and death and everything must pass away. For them the problem was not to find a God for whom all men are equally His children, the problem that bothered the Semitic people; it was the problem of finding the abiding amidst the non-abiding, a permanent reality behind this world of change, this *saṃsāra*. The Āryans thus achieved the concept of the changeless *ātman*, self or *brahman*, the Absolute beyond creation, for creation is *jagata*, it is coming into being and passing away.

The Indian mind, it seems, is irresistibly attracted towards the concept of a qualityless Reality above the phenomenal reality of the world, for in some way it is also the source of the phenomenal reality. The *Mahāyāna* Buddhists preached *sūnyavāda*, the doctrine of Emptiness. At the same time the world

also must be considered the abode of God; 'all this is encapsulated by god' (*iśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvaṃ*) as the *Isā Upaniṣad* says. This is a difficult concept, but no more difficult than the modern concept of an elementary particle being at once a wave and a particle.

Thus the Hindu mind oscillates between the *nirguṇa brahman* and the *saguṇa īvara*. Sikhism unhesitatingly accepts this dual nature of Ultimate Reality. Thus the *Āsā di Vār* speaks of *duyīqudarāt*, (stanza 1). God exist in His *sunṇ* (*Śūnya*) or *aphur* state as pure potentiality, apart from creation; He also exists as active in creation. "Above the True One (as manifest in the creation) is His Name (the Potential God)." (*Japuji*, stanza 21 line 12). It is more or less, the distinction which in the 20th century was made by the philosopher Whitehead-the distinction between God in His primordial nature and God in His consequent nature.

#### THE CREATION OR THE WORLD

If god exists in His dual nature we have to understand the transition between His nature as *sunṇ* (*śūnya*), or pure potentiality, and His nature as world- embodiment. The *śūnya* must somehow issue forth in creation. The Semitic religions have an answer, which all religions accept-God is the Creator. Some Indian religions accept this, but sometime they go beyond this and say that God is also the stuff of the Creation. The mystic consciousness is unanimous and emphatic on the point. But the relationship between the propositions 'God is the Creator' and 'God is the stuff of the world' is baffling almost as baffling as the relationship between God as *saguṇa* and God as *nirguṇa*.

Though both the Semitic and some Indian religions agree on God as the Creator, the incorrigibly speculative Hindu mind goes a step further to explain the nature of God's creativity. To understand this we should bear in mind the theory of *karma*, which is common to all systems of Indian thought. Action or *karma* is either from attachment or from non-attachment. There is action from attachment when the actor desires the outcome of

his action, that is to say, when he feels a diminution of his being if the result of his action is not achieved, when he is frustrated if the intended fruit of his action is either not forthcoming or is denied to him. There is action from non-attachment when the actor does not so identify himself with the result of his action. The difference is that between the action of a child when he eats because he is hungry, because he would suffer pangs of hunger if he did not eat, and his action when he plays, when he delights in pure activity, unconcerned with the maintenance of his body. God being Full in His own nature (*pūran*), His creation can only be understood as His play, his *līlā*.

Thus God is at once the creator and the Outsider; aloof from His creation. As Guru Nānak says again and again, He is *beparvāh* (care-free). He creates the world as His seat, and takes a disinterested delight in *it-kariāsan dītho cāau* (*Āsa di Vār*, stanza 1) or, again, "the world is as it is being directed by Him, but Himself he remain unbound and care-free." (*Japuji* stanza 3)

There is one further point; the play of the Lord could be taken as the play of a child, or that of a magician. The former is real, the latter is illusion (*māyā*). The Vedāntist is inclined towards the latter view, while Guru Nānak is emphatic that the creation of the True one cannot but be real, "Nānak, what is done by the True One is real". (*Japuji*, stanza 31,1.4).

There is no doubt that the concept of God's creation as *līlā* or play answers to something deep in the human soul. We are usually much involved in our work, but most of us have a wistful moment in our lives when we stand aloof or apart from all our doings and watch the panorama of our deeds, as the unfolding of the work of an unknown artist. In fact, in a deeper sense, the fulfilment of our moral being itself requires that sometimes we stand apart from morality, not to take a dip into morality, but just to be care-free; for morality is concern and care. Thus it is that Christ asked men to be care-free as the bird of the air and the little lilies of the field. At such rare moments beyond morality we have an intuition of our essential freedom-I am more than

what I do. At such moments, indeed, we have an intuition of the nature of the Divine, how God would see His works in delight-  
*Kari Kari vekhai nadari Nihāla (Japuji, stanza 37).*

We have now to understand the other religious intuition that the world is God. Guru Nānak himself has given expression to this thought in many places and has, in particular, endorsed the great intuition-*mahāvākya* with which Indian religious thought is closely identified, namely, that the *ātman* is *brahman*. For example-

*Jini ātama ciniā paramātama soī,  
Eko amrita birakha hai phalu amrita hoī,  
Amrita phalu jini cākhiā saci rahe aghāī,  
Tinnā bharamu na bhedu hai hari rason rasāī.*

(Guru Granth, p. 421)

'They who have realised the Self, they have seen it as the Great Self. The Tree of Immortality is one, the fruit of Immortality is one. Those who have tasted the fruit of Immortality, hunger no more. There is no distinction for them, no thought of distinction-they are one with God.'

I confess, nowhere in Sikh scriptures, or in the scriptures of any other religion, or for that matter in any mystic work known to me, has an attempt been made to explain the religious intuition with the help of reason. It is taken for granted. Or, it is thought to be beyond reason. But the modern mind is so committed to reason that the main lines of the explanation must be drawn. There is no doubt that humanity is as yet far away from uncovering the mystery of the creation. But there is also no doubt of the urge in many to take the ultimate point of mystery as far back as possible.

We will take our start from the potential nature of God-God as *sūnya*- or *aphur*. God as *sūnya* would be God as the Unconscious, *arbad narbad dhundhukāra*. (Guru Nānak p. 1035). In the beginning was utter darkness- the darkness, above all, of unconsciousness. We know from our experience that the measure of our finitude is the measure of our ignorance-that is

unawareness of nature and ourselves. Our finitude correlates with our unconsciousness; conversely, the extent to which we come to know the Creation, and expand our egos to include the Creation, to that extent we transcend our finitude. Thus God in His unconscious state would be God in some mysterious way self-split into ultimate finitudes. In these ultimate finitudes would there be an unconscious, but existentially implanted, urge towards His conscious state. Thus we have God the Conscious emerging out of God the Unconscious in a gradually ascending series of beings-elementary particles, atoms, molecules, virus-like structures, unicellular organisms, plants, animals, men- and beyond. In this ascending series in the movement of God the Finite and Unconscious towards God the Conscious and Infinite, man occupies a crucial position. In man the urge towards self-transcendence comes to self-consciousness, in the religious man it becomes dominating. Man first becomes aware of the fact that he is potentially He, that the *ātman* is *brahman*. This awareness also implies that the two natures of God are not split in time, that the movement from unconsciousness and finitude to consciousness and infinitude is a movement within God, that time is in God and not that God is in time. In His conscious and Full nature God is Timeless, and time is created in the course of the movement from God as potential to God as self-evolved.

I think, it is in some such way that we must explain the unanimous intuition of all mystics that He is the All, and that the self within is the Universal Self.

Guru Nānak has brought together all the aspects of God that we have analysed above in his famous *mūlamantra*, with which he starts his *Japuji*, the Sikh prayer *par excellence*. It runs thus; "The One Universal Being, the Real, the Name, the Creator, the person, the Spontaneous, the Harmonious, the Timeless, the Manifest, Beyond birth and death, the Self-existent- Who is known through the grace of the Teacher." In this the "Name" is to be understood as God in both the potential and manifest state; spontaneity refers to the nature of His creative activity as *lila*,



and harmony to the pre-established harmony in the Creation. Though in the movement of God as potential to God as Manifest, He takes innumerable forms, in His essential nature He remains Timeless and beyond birth and death.

We have thus in the phenomenology of religion the concern with man's creatureliness set against a variegated background, ranging from an austere search for a way out of *dukkha* in the pristine Buddhism at one end to speculative heights of *nirguna brahman* at the other. Oddly enough, both these contrasting views arise within the same Indian culture. A middle note is struck by Islam. Keeping the link between the creature and the Creator strong, the *Qur'ān* opens thus :

*"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.  
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the Beneficent,  
The merciful, Owner of the Day of Judgement.  
Thee (alone) we worship; Thee alone we ask for help.  
Show us the straight path.  
The path of those whom Thou has favoured  
Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of  
those who go astray."*

*(Pickthall's translation)*

In this scale Sikhism comes near to Hinduism. But the final *śūtra* of the *Japūji* : "Who is known through the grace of the Teacher" brings in the human concern very much to the fore.

#### THE CONCEPT OF MAN

We will now examine the idea of man-transcendence seeking being-in various religions. Invariably, all the theistic religions mention the special position of man in the Creation-both the intrinsic uniqueness of man and his supremacy over Creation. This is succinctly expressed in the Christian notion of God having created man after His own image. In the *Qur'ān*, it is stated that God was so pleased with His creation of man that He asked all His angels to bow down to him, and the unforgivable offence of Satan was his refusal to do so. In Buddhism and Hinduism man

alone seeks liberation (*mokṣa*). In theory, salvation is open to all creatures, but only man's life opens the way to salvation—all other creatures have to achieve human birth before rising to *mokṣā*. In Sikhism it is said that God gave greatness to man (*mānas ko prabh di vaḍiāi*), and that the rest of the Creations is for the service of man (*sarab jon teri panihāri*).

The religions that we are considering, however, again divide into the Semitic and the Indian on the nature of the unique in man. For the Semitic religions, man's soul is immortal and his individuality absolute. For the Indian religions man is composite and the elements could be separated; at any rate his individuality is conditional. For Buddhism man is just a compound, a *skandha*, of body, perception, feeling, volition and consciousness. There is no abiding soul, and the continuity of experience is explained by the law of *karma*. For Hinduism man is soul plus body—*nāma - rūpa*. At death the body disintegrates into the five elements of which it is composed; the soul, if it is yet to achieve salvation, takes on another body, if it is freed, it merges in the Universal Soul. In fact, it is often said that the two are already one; it is only our ignorance that makes them appear separate. In the *bhakti* school of thought the *jīva*, the individual soul, was of course, allowed greater reality. Even so, the ultimate destiny of the *jīva* is to return to the Universal Soul.

#### DEATH AND SALVATION

The eschatological speculations of the two religious streams of humanity are characteristically different. According to Semitic beliefs, at death, the soul passes into a kind of suspended animation, which lasts till the Day of Judgement. On that crucial Day deeds of each soul in its earthly life will be evaluated and, depending on these, he will be despatched to heaven or hell—heaven for the righteous and hell for the unrighteous. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, if a man has attained liberation, nothing more is to be said about him. If he has failed to earn liberation, then in accordance with his deeds, he will be born

again; good deeds will ensure him birth in a station in life where the achievement of liberation will be facilitated, bad deeds will give him a station in life where the way of liberation will be longer and more tedious. May be, he gets an animal body, and then many births will have to pass before he gets once again a fair chance to work for his *mokṣa*.

Actually, as we shall see, the eschatological beliefs of these religions only reflect through the prisms of different cultures, man's existential sense of his inalienable responsibility to transcend his creatureliness. To read into them the actual state of life after death would be an interpretation too literal and gross to appeal to the modern man. These are vivid symbols of man's ultimate concern. As such, Sikhism subscribes to both these symbols. Without espousing the doctrine of the Day of Judgement, it accepts the idea of a running balance sheet of good or bad deeds in a man's life. And, of course, springing as it does from the compelling culture of India, the belief in rounds of births and deaths lies at the very core of its doctrine.

#### FREE WILL AND KARMA

The most sensitive point in religious doctrine is what should man do to transcend his finitude? The belief structures of various religions, however, present a preliminary difficulty, which must first be tackled. Has this creature man power enough to pull himself up, as it were, by his own boot-straps? is he free to achieve his own salvation? In the Indian religions the doctrine of *karma* apparently stands in the way of this freedom; In the Semitic religions, the omnipotence of God is the great doubtcaster. In Sikhism, since it accepts both premises, the threat to man's freedom is compounded.

Says the *Qur'ān*, "all are subservient to Him" (*Surah* ii, verse 116); "Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its nature...." (xx,50); "He is the first and the last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is the knower of all things" (xvii,3); "He will forgive whom He will and He will punish whom He will. Allah is

able to do all things." "Not only individuals, even human groups and nations are under His absolute sway." "And every Nation hath its term, and when its turn cometh, they cannot put it off an hour, nor yet advance it." (xii,34). In the face of this awe-inspiring omnipotence of Allah, what is left to man, the creature?

And yet the *Qur'ān* exhorts man earnestly to walk the "straight path." What is the sense in this exhortation in the face of Allah's absolute omnipotence? The solution, I believe, lies in the theory of "vicereignty." Says the *Qur'ān*, "He it is who hath placed you (i.e., men) as viceroys of the earth.... that He may try you by (the test of ) that which He hath given you"(vi 166). That being so, the *Qur'ān* has no need of special pleading Allah wrongeth not mankind in aught, but mankind wrongeth themselves," (x, 45).

Sikhism also believes in the absolute rulership of God. "Everything is under His sway, nothing is outside it" (*Japuji*, stanza 2, p.5). Sikhism reconciles the omnipotence of God with the moral freedom of man in a characteristically Indian way... freedom through knowledge. The only unconditionally free Being is God. Everything else operates under the laws of God. Man is free, that is to say, he is liberated, to the degree he aligns himself with God. The way to align oneself with God is to understand the law and ordinances of God, and understanding them, to escape from egoism, which is the shackle that binds man; *Nānak hukamai je bujhai ta haumai kahai na koi*, *Japuji*, st. 2.1 have explained this theory of human freedom more fully in another place, and hence need not dwell on the point any longer.

The doctrine of *karma* is the principle of causation applied to mind and morals. The general principle, of course, is accepted by all religious systems- you shall reap as you sow, as the saying goes, but the doctrine of *karma* has an astonishing sweep and depth. The effect of a man's deeds are operative not only in this life, but in life after life. Your deeds will determine your future life, until you achieve your liberation. If you attain *mokṣa* in this life, you are free from the cycle of births and deaths. Your present life has resulted from what you did in your previous lives; what

you do now will determine your next life. Again, your deeds are seeds, some have probably sprouted and yielded their effects, other will lie dormant, until like the recessive genes, they meet with suitable conditions to unfold their effects.

With its range and recessive, and therefore deep-cutting potentiality, the doctrine of *karma* should strike a chord of dark pessimism in the human heart. But, strange to say, no Indian religion has ever felt itself defeated in its mission of liberating men from their creaturely bondage, even though all Indian religions subscribe to the doctrine. The reasons are two. In the first place, a *karma* or deed is like a seed and what plant will come out of a seed will depend on what the seed is. But a plant's health depends on its environmental conditions. So while a man's *karmas* are bound to bear fruit, the particular shape and form of the fruit will depend on what may accidentally happen to him. One of those accidents could be that he might meet a *guru* or Teacher, who would help him to burn out the evil effects of his past *karmas*, or to telescope them into a short span of time.

But what if even the meeting of a *Guru* is conditioned by the past *karmas*? There is no doubt that the doctrine of *karma* is sometimes interpreted in such a fine-grained manner. But we must temper this interpretation with the basic position of all Indian religions that there is a pre-established harmony in the Creation which permits every soul to work out its way to salvation. The way may be long, very very long, but no Indian religion has ever taken the position that it is closed to a single soul. On the contrary, even animals can find their way up. And no Indian religion ever argues out this point, because it is not necessary to do so. The belief in the possibility of a closed road would mean that the religious venture of man is absurd and that is inconceivable. So that while *karma* is a potent force in life, its meshes are not so fine as to exclude the possibility of an original freedom which the scheme of things has implanted in the depth of a man's being.

Since the doctrine of *karma* is an integral part of Sikhism, as

it is indeed of all Indian religions, including Buddhism, which does not even believe in transmigration; I would like to dwell on it a little longer. It is generally felt that the doctrine is too individualistic and speculative for modern taste. As a result of this doctrine, it is said, an Indian is intent on achieving his own salvation, no matter what happens to his community or society in the process. And, then this business of past and future lives!

As I have hinted earlier the doctrine of *karma* is essentially a path which helps us to understand moral responsibility. And moral responsibility is not a social phenomenon; existentially it is an individual phenomenon. My sense of moral responsibility may call on me to work primarily for my own perfection, unmindful of the fate of my fellow beings. Or, it may call on me primarily to work for the salvation of my fellow beings, as is the case with a *bodhisattva*. But even for a *bodhisattva* it is his individual responsibility to live his life so as to lead other to salvation-there is no known osmosis of conscience from mind to mind : every individual has his own conscience- this is the law of morality- and what a man's conscience is will depend on his past *karmas*, in the way we have explained this dependence above.

As regards the highly speculative nature of the doctrine there are two ideas lying at its core, which would serve to explain, if not the doctrine, at least the perennial fascination it has exercised on the Indian mind. These ideas are consonant with general religious consciousness. The first idea is that deeds shape a man, that but for the creative spark in man, he is a slave to his past I will not press it further. The second idea is that some sort of continuity of life is an essential condition for validating morality. The philosopher Kant argued that it was an inescapable demand of the practical reason. Except Buddhism, all religions believe in the continuity of soul after its life in this world. As for Buddhism, it compensates enough for its no-soul doctrine by the doctrine of *Karma* itself. It is true that many modern philosophers refuse to tie the validity of morality with continuance of life -a good deed now remains a good deed even if we know that the world is

going to end the next moment-thus they reason. We do not deny this. But when we say that a good deed remains a good deed whatever its cosmic setting in time, we are viewing the good deed aesthetically, not morally and least of all religiously. For religion is the effort of man to be God-like, and the ephemerality of a single life-time is too absurd to give any one a chance to achieve Godlikeness. Without the assumption of continuity of life, religion does not make sense. Either religion is a chimera, or the continuity of moral life is a logical desideratum. You may interpret this desideratum, as the continuity of the life of a moral individual, as the Indians did; or you may interpret it as the continuity of humanity as the sole carrier of religious or moral values, as some modern philosophers do. If we take the latter view, it is because the expansion of knowledge in modern times puts a heavy strain on the theory of cycles of births and deaths. But the Indian doctrine was evolved at a time when a man's sense of logic had nothing to feed itself on but the religious intuitions itself.

I think I have said enough on the possibility of human freedom and the essential reasonableness of 'can' in confrontation with the religious 'ought'. I now revert to the question I raised a little while ago; what can man do to transcend his finitude?

Once again, the emphases vary. For the Semitic religions the important thing is to put ourselves in a certain mental set; for the Indian religions, it is to take away. The Semitic attitude is best expressed by Buber when he says that God does not care for religion as such but for the righteousness of the individual soul, even though this righteousness may consist of "caring for God." The Indians always speak of "the way of the ancients," "the way of the Buddha", "the way of the Gurus," etc.. The Sikhs call themselves the *path*, the way (*par excellence*.)

The two concepts are complementary. Religion is both a commitment and the way in which the commitment is fulfilled in human life. No religion is devoid of any of these two elements. For a religious man the religious experience is of supreme worth.

In this experience two points are memorable; when you enter the path that leads to self-transcendence, and when you attain self-transcendence. The Semitic religious stress the first, the Indians the second point. Taking to the religious path is a commitment. It is a once-for-all happening with stamp of eternity on it. You are saved for eternity. The Indians conscious of the plodding yet to be done after you take to the religious path, emphasize the process, the time element. Eternity, no doubt, has to be achieved, but it has to be achieved through time.

Strange, however, are the ways of religion. The unstressed element in the two religious types, non the less, appears and even makes itself conspicuous. We shall see.

The Semitic religions' commitment to God carries the flavour of their transition to monotheism. As mentioned earlier, this was achieved through social conflict. For these religions commitment takes the form of transfer of allegiance from one group to another. This transfer of allegiance is emphasized by the recitation of *kalāma* in Islam and baptism in Christianity. A cursory reading of the *Qur'ān* is sufficient to impress on one that point that what the great prophet wants men to do is to cease to be disbelievers and become believers, to transfer their allegiance from other gods to the God, to Allah. Similarly, Christ being the Saviour, to be saved is to become Christian, to enter the Church. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark, 16.16. This is not to deny the importance of ethical conduct which indeed, the two religions stress without that they would not be the great religions they are. The point is that the ethical path for these religions is a corollary of their allegiance to Islam or Christianity, and not vice versa.

The Indian way to monotheism, or rather monism was, as mentioned earlier, through a dissatisfaction with the world or nature. For them, too, taking to religion was leaving the world, but for them leaving this life or this world meant a turning away from the ephemeral—the pleasures of life and youth and wealth. It is well-known that *yama* and *niyama* are essential in the



discipline of most Indian religions. At any rate, they are the religions of *sādhana*, and the religious man is verily a *sādhū*. This ascetic element in most Indian religions contrasts with the normal life-rootedness of the Semitic religions. It thus comes to happen that the element of commitment, of righteousness before God, so seminal in the Semitic religions, finds its way in the Indian religions, in its own way.

#### TIME

Similarly, the element of time enters the two types of religions in a different way. In Indian religions, life is wayfaring. This image of wayfaring in the Indian mind is so ineradicable that even the religions that consider the most important religious experience as surrender to God are also termed wayfaring. Islam also means surrender to God, but here it is not conceived as wayfaring. But *bhakti* is a *mārga*, it is taking a way. The reason, as explained earlier, is that the Indians fix their telescope on *mokṣa*, liberation. And liberation can only be achieved through a liberating process, something that takes place in time. For the Semitic religions, too, religious liberation happens in time. But there, characteristically, it is not a matter of individual life-time, but social life-time. For the Indians the process of liberation is conceptually or abstractly temporal, for the Semitic religions it is temporal in the sense of being historical. For example, for the Jews the reality of God was made manifest in the Exodus and later in the return from the Babylonian exile. For Christians, God made himself manifest in the coming of Christ, in his crucifixion and his resurrection. For Muslims, appearance of the Prophet and the *Hejira* are the cardinal events in man's progress towards self-transcendence.

Sikhism is in the nature of a synthesis between these two religious types, the religion of commitment and religion as wayfaring. Sikhism inherits the concept of turning away from the world from Hinduism and Buddhism. Purity of individual life as self-restraint in the presence of pleasures of life-*dil darvāni*-has

its own place in Sikhism. At the same time the ascetic accent is avoided. Further, in the manner of the Semitic religions, becoming the Guru's Sikh, celebrated in an individual's life by the ritual of baptism (*khaṇḍe di pahul*), is also an integral aspect of Sikhism. Again, Sikhism is a *panth*, a way. As we shall, see, the image of the ways is not just a matter of formal inheritance from an older culture, but has its own shape in Sikhism. Then, it also embodies in its texture the historical aspect of time. If a proof is needed, it is there in the daily Sikh prayer, the *ardās*, where the whole panorama of Sikh history, from Guru Nānak to the loss of their *gurdvārās*-temples in the aftermath of India's partition is remembered and, as it were burnt into Sikh soul.

#### DIFFERENT PATHS

All the higher religions are moral religions, in the sense that they prescribe a universally valid ethics as the distinctive style of religious life. There is much that is common to these ethics - elimination of the ego, kindness to others, a soft corner in one's heart for the poor, and remembrance of God (this not in Buddhism). But there are also clear tonal differences. We see them in the original statements of these religions.

In Hinduism, the eight-fold path of *yoga* is generally accepted as the standard requisite preparation for ego-transcendence. It consists of *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyaṇa* and *śamādhi*. The last three pertain to meditation and the middle three to control of body and sense. Only the first two, *yama* and *niyama*, pertain to ethical conduct, and together they constitute the ten commandments of Hinduism. They are : *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truth-speaking), *asteya* (not taking what does not belong to you), *brahmacarya* (continence), and *aparigraha* (relinquishment of worldly things). The *niyamas* are : *śauca* (purity), *santoṣa* (contentment), *tapas* (austerities), *svādhyāya* (study), and *iśvarapraṇidhāna* (meditation on Lord).

Buddhism too has its eight-fold path comprising Right view, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right

Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Contemplation. Here, again, it may be noted that the path of ego-transcendence is more than just an ethical path.

For Islamic ethics, I will quote from two *surahs*. *Surah* iv, 36 exhorts the Muslims to show "kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans and the needy, and unto the neighbour.... and the fellow traveller and the wayfarer and the slave." *Surah* xxiii regards as virtuous the believers "who are humble in their prayers, and who shun vain conversation, and who are prayers of the poor-due (i.e., *zakāt* or charity). And who guard their modesty (that is, shun adultery),.... And who are shepherds of their pledge and their covenant, and who pay heed to their prayers."

The Christian ethics-the ethics of love-is given succinctly in chapter five of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. It is a refinement and elevation of the Jewish Commandments. Instead of "Thou shalt not kill", Christ bids a good man to eschew all enmity. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Instead of "Thou shalt not commit adultery", he asks you to pluck out your eyes if they cast a lewd glance on any woman other than your wife. Instead of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" Christ asks you to resist no evil and to turn your other cheek to him who smites you on one cheek. "Give to him that asketh thee and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." The other injunction may be stated as— "Not to forswear thyself." "Judge not, that ye be not judged", and "Do unto other what you wish they do unto you."

Finally, we refer to the ethical content of a good life, as stated by Guru Nānak. This is nine-fold as follows :*santokh* (contentment in performing the roles pertaining to your station in life), *saram* (life of reflection), *jugat* (self-culture), *Partit* (faith), *āipanthī* (respect for all faith), *mani jītai jagujītu* (kindness and courtesy to others) *daia* (compassion) and *giān* (knowledge).

The above skeletal presentation of the ethical ideals held as

worthy of a religious man by the five religions shows the great heights to which they seek to raise men. However, I have taken some space to give the views in their pristine freshness and to bring out the distinctiveness of their flavour. The Semitic emphasis is on deeds, on individual, on strictly moral behaviour—that is to say, on righteousness, righteousness of individual man in the eyes of a personal God. The Indians invariably go beyond morality as such, e.g., to knowledge and meditation. In Sikhism, as stated in the *japuji*, beyond the Region of Morality the religious path leads to the Regions of Knowledge, Reflection, His Grace and Truth—in that order. The excellences of knowledge and meditation do not fit into the Semitic concept of religion; they belong properly speaking to Indian religions.

The hue of moral earnestness is more distinctive in the Semitic religions. Perhaps because the Indian emphasis is different, even in things common to the two ethical outlooks the shades of meaning vary. For example, both Christianity and Islam teach kindness, but the context is always the context of your fellowmen. The Indian sense of kindness extends to all living beings invariably, and this is also true of Sikhism. The ground of kindness or compassion is explained as seeing your own self in others—*āp pachāne sarab jāia*, (*Guru Granth*). This kind of idiom is alien to the Semitic religions, for their moral earnestness does not permit them to go beyond man, and does not permit a confusion of individuals. In a complete religious vision, both views have their place.

The Semitic religions do not go beyond persons while the Indian religions do not observe this boundary. This difference cuts deep into the whole phenomenon of religion in the two cultures. For example, in his book *Father Joseph*, Julian Huxley, while comparing Hindu and Christian mysticism, shows that the Christian mystics, because of the fundamental difference we have mentioned above, cannot experience the *kaivalya* state of the *yogis*, where the *yogi* is unpersoned to merge in God. For the Christian the highest state of mysticism is to be like God, or to be

near Christ, and be bathed in the bliss of his love. In the highest state of contemplation, the Christian does not go beyond Christ, for the Hindu-and for that matter for the Sikh-there is nothing between the self and the Universal Self.

### THE GURU

We shall now touch onther topic-the place of the Teacher, the man who leads men to God or salvation. There is no doubt of the special place he occupies in the doctrine of the various religions. Here the cultural boundaries seem to break down. Probably, the Christians give the highest place to their Master. For them Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour. For the Hindu, the *guru* is very near to God. Buddhism and Islam give nothing but a human status to the Buddha and the Prophet, respectively. But-not so human! The Buddhists honour and take refuge in the Three Jewels (*triratna*), the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṃgha. The Muslims trinity of Allah, the Prophet and the *Qur'ān* almost reminds one of God the Son, God the Father and God the Holy Ghost of the Christians. "And so for him who believeth not in Allah and His Mëssenger-Lo! We have prepared a flame for disbelievers."

Sikhism once again attempts to combine two views. The Guru is both human and God-like. The Guru is born and dies as other men do. "I am the slave of God, came to see this fair of the world", says Guru Gobind Singh. There is no doubt that the Guru Granth contains statements, such as, "Guru Arjan is God Manifest (Guru Arjan *pratakh Hari*), but there is no hesitation in saying that they are out of tune with the general trend of thought in the *Granth*. Guru Nānak has again and again described himself as lowly in the eyes of God-his proudest claim was that he was a minstrel of God. At the same time, the Guru as the Word, as one who takes the disciple by the hand to lead him into the presence of the Lord is so close to God in the sight of the disciple that distinction between the Guru and God is but a broken epistemological tool. As being who has broken through the

cramping walls of egoism, the Guru is a universal being indistinguishable from the Universal Being.

### THE CONCLUSIONS

The time has now come to end our journey into the fascinating realms of man's religious consciousness. We have not been able to touch on many problems of interest, e.g., the nature of religious congregation because of the limited scope of this chapter. As such we have scanned the religious consciousness in two of its streams-what I have called the Indian streams and the Semitic stream. There are other stream, too-the great stream of Chinese civilization and the Zoroastrian religion, but our main purpose was to illumine the Sikh way by tracing principal influences and correspondences.

Insofar as the two streams are concerned, we may say that the primary fact of religious experience in the Semitic religions is righteousness, and the Vision of reality which accords with it follows. In the Indian religions, the primary fact of religious experiences is the vision of reality, and the pattern of piety or religious conduct follows from that. Sikhism places great value on righteousness. "Truth is supreme over everything but righteousness" (*sacahu orai sabhu ko upari sach ācāru*- Guru Nānak 62). But, essentially, Sikhism is a child of Indian culture. In the *Gītā* the vision of *sthitaprajña*- the liberated soul-is first explained, and then we are told how the *sthitaprajña* conducts himself among men and in the world. Similarly, in the *Japuji*, we have the grand vision of the Lord and His Creation in the so dara stanza (27) and then immediately in the following four stanzas, we are shown the conduct of the man who has this vision.

Even the fragrance of piety in the two streams, as we have seen is different. In the Semitic religions it is concerned with a personal God, to whom one gives one's full and final allegiance. In the Indian religions the fragrance is of the earnest seeking of release from the life such as men live in the world-a life reeking

with frustration and misery-and attaining the bliss, that is the universal consciousness. Here, again, Sikhism follows the synthesising path. Its monotheism is as ascetic as that of Islam, but it is as intent on *mukti* or liberation as Hinduism.

Because the primary fact in religious experience is the vision of reality in the Indian theme, there is no distinction between philosophy and religion, or, say philosophy and theology. Among the Semitics there is clear distinction between the two-philosophy is an attempt to see reality, while theology is an attempt to understand God centred consciousness. Here, again Sikhism is aligned with Hinduism and Buddhism. Its religion is *Gurmat*, its philosophy is *Gurmat*, the vision of life and reality given in the writings of the Guru.

We have thus seen that Sikhism attempts to effect a synthesis of the two streams of religious consciousness. Essentially, it lies in the authentic pattern of the way of life of Indian humanity, enlivened by the perennial themes of Hindu philosophy. But it has shown great sensitiveness to the essential truths enshrined in the other streams. In this it is primarily indebted to Islam. This debt was inevitable, for at the time and place Sikhism took shape under the genius of Guru Nānak and his successors, Islam was asserting its ascendancy over Hinduism, both politically and psychologically. It has been one of the themes in this paper that the different religions, though universal in their message, are yet the result of the historical experience of the people following them. And Sikhism too, though of universal significance, has been shaped by the historical experience of the Sikhs. As always, time enters the search for the Timeless.

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